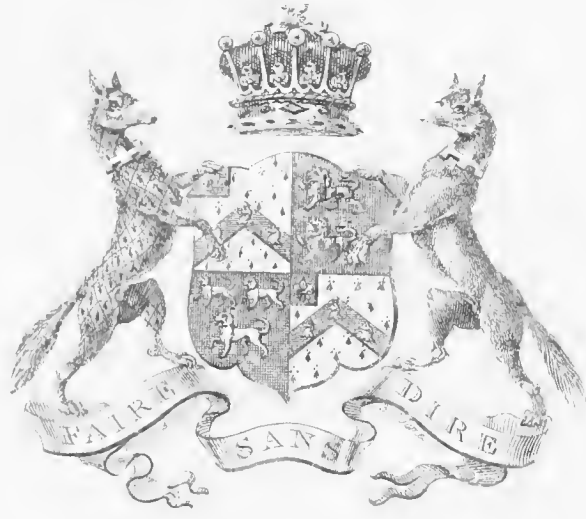


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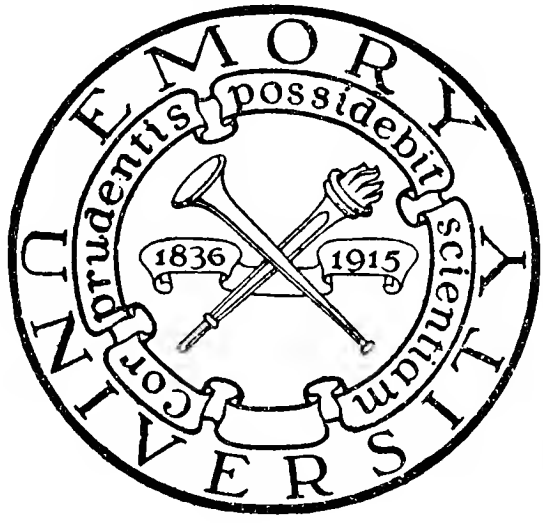

# HELEN,

## A TALE.

BY

MARIA EDGEWORTH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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# HELEN.

## CHAPTER I.

"THERE is Helen in the Lime-walk," said Mrs. Collingwood, to her husband, as she looked out of the window. The slight figure of a young person in deep mourning appeared between the trees, — "How slowly she walks! She looks very unhappy!"

"Yes," said Mr. Collingwood, with a sigh, "she is young to know sorrow, and to struggle with difficulties to which she is quite unsuited both by nature and by education, difficulties which no one could ever have foreseen. How changed are all her prospects!"

"Changed indeed!" said Mrs. Collingwood, "pretty young creature!—Do you recollect how gay she was when first we came to Cecilhurst? and even last year, when she had

hopes of her uncle's recovery, and when he talked of taking her to London, how she enjoyed the thoughts of going there! The world was bright before her then. How cruel of that uncle, with all his fondness for her, never to think what was to become of her the moment he was dead: to breed her up as an heiress, and leave her a beggar!"

"But what is to be done, my dear?" said her husband.

"I am sure I do not know; I can only feel for her, you must think for her."

"Then I think I must tell her directly of the state in which her uncle's affairs are left, and that there is no provision for her."

"Not yet, my dear," said Mrs. Collingwood; "I don't mean about there being no provision for herself, that would not strike her, but her uncle's debts, there is the point: she would feel dreadfully the disgrace to his memory—she loved him so tenderly!"

"Yet it must be told," said Mr. Collingwood, resolutely, "and perhaps it will be better now; she will feel it less, while her mind is absorbed by grief for him."

Helen was the only daughter of Colonel and Lady Anne Stanley; her parents had both died when she was too young to know her loss, nor had she ever felt till now, that she was an orphan, for she had been adopted and brought up with the greatest tenderness by her uncle, Dean Stanley, a man of genius, learning, and sincere piety, with the most affectionate heart, and a highly cultivated understanding. But on one subject he really had not common sense; in money matters he was inconceivably imprudent and extravagant; extravagant from charity, from taste, from habit. He possessed rich benefices in the church, and an ample private fortune, and it was expected that his niece would be a great heiress — he had often said so himself, and his fondness for her confirmed every one in this belief. But the Dean's taste warred against his affection: his too hospitable, magnificent establishment had exceeded his income; he had too much indulged his passion for all the fine arts, of which he was a liberal patron; he had made a splendid collection of pictures — a magnificent library; and on buildings and improvements he had lavished im-

mense sums of money. Cursed with too fine a taste, and with too soft a heart — a heart too well knowing how to yield, never could he deny himself, much less any other human being, any gratification which money can command; and soon the necessary consequence was, that he had no money to command, his affairs fell into embarrassment — his estate was sold; but, as he continued to live with his accustomed hospitality and splendour, the world believed him to be as rich as ever.

Some rise superior from the pressure of pecuniary difficulties, but that was not the case with Dean Stanley, not from want of elasticity of mind, but perhaps because his ingenuity continually suggested resources, and his sanguine character led him, in his difficulties, to plunge into speculations — they failed, and in the anxiety and agitation which his embarrassments occasioned him, he fell into bad health, his physicians ordered him to Italy Helen, his devoted nurse, the object upon which all his affections centered, accompanied him to Florence. There his health and spirits seemed at

first, by the change of climate, to be renovated; but in Italy he found fresh temptations to extravagance, his learning and his fancy combined to lead him on from day to day to new expense, and he satisfied his conscience by saying to himself that all the purchases which he now made were only so much capital which would, when sold in England, bring more than their original price, and would, he flattered himself, increase the fortune he intended for his niece. But one day, while he was actually bargaining for an antique, he was seized with a fit of apoplexy. From this fit, he recovered, and was able to return to England with his niece. Here he found his debts and difficulties had been increasing; he was harassed with doubts as to the monied value of his last chosen chef-d'œuvres; his mind preyed upon his weakened frame, he was seized with another fit, lost his speech, and after struggles the most melancholy for Helen to see, feeling that she could do nothing for him — he expired — his eyes fixed on her face, and his powerless hand held between both hers.

All was desolation and dismay at the deanery;

Helen was removed to the vicarage by the kindness of the good Vicar and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Collingwood.

It was found that the Dean, instead of leaving a large fortune, had nothing to leave. All he had laid out at the deanery was sunk and gone; his real property all sold; his imaginary wealth, his pictures, statues—his whole collection, even his books, his immense library, shrunk so much in value when estimated after his death, that the demands of the creditors could not be nearly answered: as to any provision for Miss Stanley, that was out of the question.

These were the circumstances which Mrs. Collingwood feared to reveal, and which Mr. Collingwood thought should be told immediately to Helen; but hitherto she had been so much absorbed in sorrow for the uncle she had loved, that no one had ventured on the task.

Though Mr. and Mrs. Collingwood had not known her long (for they had but lately come to the neighbourhood), they had the greatest sympathy for her orphan state; and they had seen enough of her during her uncle's illness to make them warmly attached to her. Every

body loved her that knew her, rich or poor, for in her young prosperity, from her earliest childhood, she had been always sweet-tempered and kind-hearted; for though she had been bred up in the greatest luxury, educated as heiress to a large fortune, taught every accomplishment, used to every fashionable refinement, she was not spoiled — she was not in the least selfish. Indeed her uncle's indulgence, excessive though it was, had been always joined with so much affection, that it had early touched her heart, and filled her whole soul with ardent gratitude.

It is said, that the ill men do, lives after them — the good is oft interred with their bones. It was not so with Dean Stanley: the good he had intended for Helen, his large fortune, was lost and gone; but the real good he had done for his niece remained in full force, and to the honour of his memory: the excellent education he had given her—it was excellent not merely in the worldly meaning of the word, as regards accomplishments and elegance of manners, but excellent in having given her a firm sense of duty, as the great principle of action, and as

the guide of her naturally warm generous affections.

And now, when Helen returned from her walk, Mr. Collingwood, in the gentlest and kindest manner he was able, informed her of the confusion in her uncle's affairs, the debts, the impossibility of paying the creditors, the total loss of all fortune for herself.

Mrs. Collingwood had well foreseen the effect this intelligence would have on Helen. At first, with fixed incredulous eyes, she could not believe that her uncle could have been in any way to blame. Twice she asked — "Are you sure — are you certain — is there no mistake?" And when the conviction was forced upon her, still her mind did not take in any part of the facts, as they regarded herself. Astonished and shocked, she could feel nothing but the disgrace that would fall upon the memory of her beloved uncle.

Then she exclaimed — "One part of it is not true, I am certain:" and hastily leaving the room, she returned immediately with a letter in her hand, which, without speaking,

she laid before Mr. Collingwood, who wiped his spectacles quickly, and read.

It was addressed to the poor Dean, and was from an old friend of his, Colonel Munro, stating that he had been suddenly ordered to India, and was obliged to return a sum of money which the Dean had many years before placed in his hands, to secure a provision for his niece, Miss Stanley.

This letter had arrived when the Dean was extremely ill. Helen had been afraid to give it to him, and yet thought it right to do so. The moment her uncle had read the letter, which he was still able to do, and to comprehend, though he was unable to speak, he wrote on the back with difficulty, in a sadly trembling hand, yet quite distinctly, these words:— "That money is yours, Helen Stanley: no one has any claim upon it. When I am gone consult Mr. Collingwood; consider him as your guardian."

Mr Collingwood perceived that this provision had been made by the Dean for his niece before he had contracted his present debts—

many years before, when he had sold his paternal estate, and that, knowing his own disposition to extravagance, he had put this sum out of his own power.

"Right — all right, my dear Miss Stanley," said the Vicar; "I am very glad—it is all justly yours."

"No," said Helen, "I shall never touch it: take it, my dear Mr. Collingwood, take it, and pay all the debts before any one can complain."

Mr. Collingwood pressed her to him without speaking; but after a moment's recollection he replied:—

"No, no, my dear child, I cannot let you do this: as your guardian, I cannot allow such a young creature as you are, in a moment of feeling, thus to give away your whole earthly fortune—it must not be."

"It must, indeed it must, my dear sir. Oh, pay everybody at once—directly."

"No, not directly, at all events," said Mr. Collingwood—"certainly not directly: the law allows a year."

"But if the money is ready," said Helen, "I cannot understand why the debt should

not be paid at once. Is there any law against paying people immediately ?"

Mr. Collingwood half smiled, and on the strength of that half smile Helen concluded that he wholly yielded. " Yes, do," cried she, " send this money this instant to Mr. James, the solicitor: he knows all about it, you say, and he will see everybody paid."

" Stay, my dear Miss Stanley," said the Vicar, " I cannot consent to this, and you should be thankful that I am steady. If I were at this minute to consent, and to do what you desire—pay away your whole fortune, you would repent, and reproach me with my folly before the end of the year—before six months were over."

" Never, never," said Helen.

Mrs. Collingwood strongly took her husband's side of the question. Helen could have no idea, she said, how necessary money would be to her. It was quite absurd to think of living upon air; could Miss Stanley think she was to go on in this world without money ?

Helen said she was not so absurd; she re-

minded Mrs. Collingwood that she should still have what had been her mother's fortune.

Before Helen had well got out the words, Mrs. Collingwood replied,

"That will never do, you will never be able to live upon that: the interest of Lady Anne Stanley's fortune, I know what it was, would just do for pocket-money for you in the style of life for which you have been educated. Some of your uncle's great friends will of course invite you presently, and then you will find what is requisite with that set of people."

"Some of my uncle's friends perhaps will," said Helen; "but I am not obliged to go to great or fine people, and if I cannot afford it I will not, for I can live independently on what I have, be it ever so little."

Mrs. Collingwood allowed that if Helen were to live always in the country in retirement, she might *do* upon her mother's fortune.

"Wherever I live — whatever becomes of me, the debts must be paid—I will do it myself;" and she took up a pen as she spoke— "I will write to Mr. James by this day's post."

Surprised at her decision of manner and the firmness of one in general so gentle, yielding, and retired, and feeling that he had no legal power to resist, Mr. Collingwood at last gave way, so far as to agree that he would in due time use this money in satisfying her uncle's creditors; *provided she lived for the next six months within her income.*

Helen smiled, as if that were a needless proviso.

"I warn you," continued Mr. Collingwood, "that you will most probably find before six months are over, that you will want some of this money to pay debts of your own."

"No, no, no," cried she; "of that there is not the slightest chance."

"And now, my dear child," said Mrs. Collingwood, "now that Mr. Collingwood has promised to do what you wish, will you do what we wish? Will you promise to remain with us? to live here with us, for the present at least; we will resign you whenever better friends may claim you, but for the present will you try us?"

"Try!" in a transport of gratitude and

affection she could only repeat the words "Try! oh, my dear friends, how happy I am, an orphan, without a relation, to have such a home."

But though Mr. and Mrs. Collingwood, childless as they were, felt real happiness in having such a companion—such an adopted daughter, yet they were sure that some of Dean Stanley's great friends and acquaintance in high life would ask his niece to spend the spring in town, or the summer in the country with them; and post after post came letters of condolence to Miss Stanley from all these personages of high degree, professing the greatest regard for their dear amiable friend's memory, and for Miss Stanley, his and their dear Helen; and these polite and kind expressions were probably sincere at the moment, but none of these dear friends seemed to think of taking any trouble on her account, or to be in the least disturbed by the idea of never seeing their dear Helen again in the course of their lives.

Helen, quite touched by what was said of her uncle, thought only of him; but when she

shewed the letters to Mr. and Mrs. Collingwood, they marked the oversight, and looked significantly as they read, folded the letters up and returned them to Helen in silence. Afterwards, between themselves, they indulged in certain comments.

"Lady C—— does not invite her, for she has too many daughters, and they are too ugly, and Helen is too beautiful," said Mrs. Collingwood.

"Lady L—— has too many sons," said Mr. Collingwood, "and they are too poor, and Helen is not an heiress now."

"But old Lady Margaret Dawe, who has neither sons nor daughters, what stands in the way there? Oh! her delicate health—delicate health is a blessing to some people—excuses them always from doing anything for anybody."

"And the Berkeleys, the Dean's most particular friends, and who doated on Helen, what can they find to say? They would have been really so happy to have her; *but* going to travel, God knows where, or for how long! Oh!—and no carriage could carry Miss Stanley, I suppose, along with them."

Then came many, who hoped, in general, to see Miss Stanley as soon as possible; and some who were "very anxious indeed" to have their dear Helen with them; but when or where never specified, and a general invitation, as every body knows, means nothing but "Good morning to you."

Mrs. Coldstream ends with, "I forbear to say more at present," without giving any reason.

"And here is the Dean's dear Duchess, always in the greatest haste, with 'You know my heart,' in a parenthesis, 'ever and ever most sincerely and affec'— yours.'"

"And the Davenants," continued Mrs. Collingwood, "who were such near neighbours, and who were so kind to the Dean at Florence; they have not even written!"

"But they are at Florence still," said Mr. Collingwood, "they can hardly have heard of the poor Dean's death."

The Davenants were the great people of this part of the country; their place, Cecilhurst, was close to the deanery and to the vicarage, but they were not known to the Collingwoods,

who had come to Cecilhurst during the Dean's absence abroad.

"And here is Mrs. Wilmot too," continued Mrs. Collingwood, "wondering, as usual, at everybody else, wondering that Lady Barker has not invited Miss Stanley to Castle-port; and it never enters into Mrs. Wilmot's head that she might invite her to Wilmot's fort. And this is friendship, as the world goes!"

"And as it has been ever since the beginning of the world, and will be to the end," replied Mr. Collingwood. "Only I thought in Dean Stanley's case—however, I am glad his niece does not see it as we do."

No—with all Helen's natural quickness of sensibility, she suspected nothing, saw nothing in each excuse but what was perfectly reasonable and kind; she was sure that her uncle's friends could not mean to neglect her. In short, she had an undoubting belief in those she loved, and she loved all those who she thought had loved her uncle, or who had ever shown her kindness. Helen had never yet experienced neglect or detected insincerity, and nothing in her own true and warm heart could

suggest the possibility of double-dealing, or even of coldness in friendship. She had yet to learn that—

"No after-friendship ere can raze
Th' endearments of our early days,
And ne'er the heart such fondness prove,
As when it first began to love;
Ere lovely nature is expelled,
And friendship is romantic held.
But prudence comes with hundred eyes,
The veil is rent, the vision flies,
The dear illusions will not last,
The era of enchantment 's past:
The wild romance of life is done,
The real history begun!"

## CHAPTER II.

SOME time after this, Mr. Collingwood, rising from the breakfast-table, threw down the day's paper, saying there was nothing in it; Mrs. Collingwood glancing her eye over it exclaimed—

"Do you call this nothing? Helen, hear this!

"Marriage in high life—At the Ambassador's chapel, Paris, on the 16th instant, General Clarendon to Lady Cecilia Davenant, only daughter of Earl and Countess Davenant."

"Married! absolutely married!" exclaimed Helen: "I knew it was to be, but so soon I did not expect. Ambassador's chapel — where did you say?—Paris? No, that must be a mistake, they are all at Florence — settled there, I thought their letters said."

Mrs. Collingwood pointed to the paragraph, and Helen saw it was certainly Paris — there could be no mistake. Here was a full account of the marriage, and a list of all the fashionables who attended the fair bride to the hymeneal altar. Her father gave her away.

"Then certainly it is so," said Helen, and she came to the joyful conclusion that they must all be on their way home: — "Dear Lady Davenant coming to Cecilhurst again!"

Lady Cecilia, "the fair bride," had been Helen's most intimate friend; they had been when children much together, for the deanery was so close to Cecilhurst, that the shrubbery opened into the park.

"But is not it rather extraordinary, my dear Helen," said Mrs. Collingwood, "that you should see this account of your dear Lady Cecilia's marriage in the public papers only, without having heard of it from any of your friends themselves—not one letter, not one line from any of them?"

A cloud came over Helen's face, but it passed quickly, and she was sure they had written — something had delayed their letters.

She was certain Lady Davenant or Lady Cecilia had written; or, if they had not, it was because they could not possibly, in such a hurry, such agitation as they must have been in. At all events, whether they had written or not, she was certain they could not mean anything unkind; she could not change her opinion of her friend for a letter more or less.

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Collingwood, "how long is it since you have seen them?"

"About two years; just two years it is since I parted from them at Florence."

"And you have corresponded with Lady Cecilia constantly ever since?" asked Mrs. Collingwood.

"Not constantly"

"Not constantly — oh!" said Mrs. Collingwood, in a prolonged and somewhat sarcastic tone.

"Not constantly—so much the better," said her husband; "a constant correspondence is always a great burthen, and moreover, sometimes a great evil, between young ladies especially—I hate the sight of ladies' long cross-barred letters."

Helen said that Lady Cecilia's letters were never cross-barred, always short and far between.

"You seem wonderfully fond of Lady Cecilia," said Mrs. Collingwood.

"Not wonderfully," replied Helen, "but very fond, and no wonder, we were bred up together. And"—continued she, after a little pause, "and if Lady Cecilia had not been so generous as she is, she might have been—she must have been, jealous of the partiality, the fondness, which her mother always shewed me."

"But was not Lady Davenant's heart large enough to hold two?" asked Mrs. Collingwood. "You and her daughter, was not she fond of her daughter?"

"Yes, as far as she knew her, but she did not know Lady Cecilia."

"Not know her own daughter!" Mr. and Mrs. Collingwood both at once exclaimed, "How could that possibly be?"

"Very easily," Helen said, "because she saw so little of her."

"Was not Lady Cecilia educated at home?"

"Yes, but still Lady Cecilia, when a child,

was all day long with her governess, and at Cecilhurst the governess's apartments were quite out of the way, in one of the wings at the end of a long corridor, with a separate staircase; she might as well have been in another house."

"Bad arrangement," said Mr. Collingwood speaking to himself as he stood on the hearth. "Bad arrangement which separates mother and daughter."

"At that time," continued Helen, "there was always a great deal of company at Cecilhurst. Lord Davenant was one of the ministers of state then. I believe — I know he saw a great many political people, and Lady Davenant was forced to be always with them talking."

"Talking! yes, yes!" said Mr. Collingwood, "I understand it all; Lady Davenant is a great politician, and female politicians, with their heads full of the affairs of Europe, cannot have time to think of the affairs of their families."

"What is the matter, my dear Helen?" said Mrs. Collingwood, taking her hand. Helen had tears in her eyes and looked unhappy.

"I have done very wrong," said she; "I have said something that has given you a bad, a false opinion of one for whom I have the greatest admiration and love — of Lady Davenant. I am excessively sorry; I have done very wrong."

"Not the least, my dear child; you told us nothing but what everybody knows — that she is a great politician, you told us no more."

"But I should have told you more, and what nobody knows better than I do," cried Helen, "that Lady Davenant is a great deal more, and a great deal better than a politician. I was too young to judge, you may think, but young as I was, I could see and feel, and children can and do often see a great deal into character, and I assure you Lady Davenant's is a sort of deep, high character, that you would admire."

Mrs. Collingwood observed with surprise, that Helen spoke of her with even more enthusiasm than of her dear Lady Cecilia.

"Yes, because she is a person more likely to excite enthusiasm."

"You did not feel afraid of her then?

"I do not say that," replied Helen, "yet it was not fear exactly, it was more a sort of awe, but still I liked it. It is so delightful to have something to look up to. I love Lady Davenant all the better, even for that awe I felt of her."

"And I like you all the better for everything you feel, think, and say about your friends," cried Mrs. Collingwood; "but let us see what they will do; when I see whether they can write, and what they write to you, I will tell you more of my mind—if any letters come."

"If!—" Helen repeated, but would say no more—and there it rested, or at least stopped By common consent the subject was not recurred to for several days. Every morning at post-time Helen's colour rose with expectation, and then faded with disappointment, still with the same confiding look and tone of affection, she said, "I am sure it is not their fault."

"Time will shew," said Mrs. Collingwood

At length, one morning when she came down to breakfast, "Triumph, my dear Helen!" cried Mrs. Collingwood, holding up two large letters! all scribbled over with "Try this place and try

that, mis-sent to Cross-keys—Over moor," and heaven knows where—and—no matter.

Helen seized the packets and tore them open; one was from Paris, written immediately after the news of Dean Stanley's death; it contained two letters, one from Lady Davenant, the other from Lady Cecilia—"written, only think!" cried she, "how kind!—the very day before her marriage; signed 'Cecilia Davenant, for the last time,'—and Lady Davenant, too—to think of me in all their happiness."

She opened the other letters, written since their arrival in England, she read eagerly on, —then stopped, and her looks changed.

"Lady Davenant is not coming to Cecilhurst. Lord Davenant is to be sent ambassador to Petersburgh, and Lady Davenant will go along with him!—Oh! there is an end of everything, I shall never see her again!—Stay—she is to be first with Lady Cecilia at Clarendon Park, wherever that is, for some time—she does not know how long—she hopes to see me there—oh! how kind, how delightful!"

Helen put Lady Davenant's letter proudly into Mrs. Collingwood's hand, and eagerly opened Lady Cecilia's.

"So like herself! so like Cecilia," cried she. Mrs. Collingwood read and acknowledged that nothing could be kinder, for here was an invitation, not vague or general, but particular, and pressing as heart could wish or heart could make it. "We shall be at Clarendon Park on Thursday, and shall expect you, dearest Helen, on Monday, just time, the General says, for an answer; so write and say where horses shall meet you," &c. &c.

"Upon my word, this is being in earnest, when it comes to horses meeting," cried Mr. Collingwood. "Of course you will go directly?"

Helen was in great agitation.

"Write—write—my dear, directly," said Mrs. Collingwood, "for the post-boy waits."

And before she had written many lines the Cross-post boy sent up word that he could wait no longer.

Helen wrote she scarcely knew what, but in short an acceptance, signed, sealed, delivered, and then she took breath. Off cantered the boy with the letters bagged, and scarcely was he out of sight, when Helen saw under the table the cover of the packet, in which were some

lines that had not yet been read. They were in Lady Cecilia's hand-writing—a postscript.

"I forgot, dear Helen, the thing that is most essential, (you remember our friend D——'s definition of *une bêtise : c'est d'oublier la chose essentielle ;*) I forgot to tell you that the General declares he will not hear of a mere *visit* from you. He bids me tell you that it must be 'till death or marriage.' So, my dear friend, you must make up your mind in short to live with us till you find a General Clarendon of your own. To this postscript no reply —silence gives consent."

"If I had seen this!" said Helen, as she laid it before Mr. and Mrs. Collingwood, "I ought to have answered, but, indeed, I never saw it;" she sprang forward instantly to ring the bell, exclaiming, "It is time yet—stop the boy— 'silence gives consent.' I must write. I cannot leave you, my dear friends, in this way. I did not see that postscript, believe me I did not."

They believed her, they thanked her, but they would not let her ring the bell; they said she had better not bind herself in any way either to themselves or to Lady Cecilia. Accept of

the present invitation she must—she must go to see her friend on her marriage; she must take leave of her dear Lady Davenant before her departure.

"They are older friends than we are," said Mr. Collingwood, "they have the first claim upon you; but let us think of it as only a visit now. As to a residence for life, that you can best judge of for yourself after you have been some-time at Clarendon Park; if you do not like to remain there, you know how gladly we shall welcome you here again, my child, or, if you decide to live with those you have known so long and loved so much, we cannot be offended at your choice."

This generous kindness, this freedom from jealous susceptibility, touched Helen's heart, and increased her agitation. She could not bear the thoughts of either the reality or appearance of neglecting these kind good people, the moment she had other prospects, and frequently in all the hurry of her preparations, she repeated, "It will only be a visit at Clarendon Park. I will return to you, I shall write to you, my dear Mrs. Collingwood, at all events, constantly."

When Mr. Collingwood gave her his parting blessing he reminded her of his warning about her fortune. Mrs. Collingwood reminded her of her promise to write. The carriage drove from the door. Helen's heart was full of the friends she was leaving, but by degrees the agitation of the parting subsided, her tears ceased, her heart grew lighter, and the hopes of seeing her friends at Clarendon Park arose bright in her mind, and her thoughts all turned upon Cecilia, and Lady Davenant.

## CHAPTER III.

HELEN looked eagerly out of the carriage-window for the first view of Clarendon Park. It satisfied—it surpassed her expectations. It was a fine, aristocratic place:—ancestral trees; and a vast expanse of park; herds of deer, yellow and dark, or spotted, their heads appearing in the distance just above the fern, or grazing near, startled as the carriage passed. Through the long approach, she caught various views of the house, partly gothic, partly of modern architecture; it seemed of great extent and magnificence.

All delightful so far; but now for her own reception. Her breath grew quick and quicker as she came near and nearer to the house. Some one was standing on the steps. Was it General Clarendon? No; only a servant. The carriage stopped, more servants appeared, and

as Helen got out, a very sublime-looking personage informed her that "Lady Cecilia and the General were out riding—only in the park—would be in immediately."

And as she crossed the great hall, the same sublime person informed her that there would be still an hour before dinner-time, and inquired whether she would be pleased to be shown to her own apartment, or to the library? Helen felt chilled and disappointed, because this was not exactly the way she had expected things would be upon her arrival. She had pictured to herself Cecilia running to meet her in the hall.

Without answering the groom of the chambers, she asked, "Is Lady Davenant out too?"

"No; her ladyship is in the library."

"To the library then directly."

And through the antichamber she passed rapidly, impatient of a momentary stop of her conductor to open the folding-doors, while a man, with a letter-box in hand, equally impatient, begged that Lady Davenant might be told, "The General's express was waiting."

Lady Davenant was sealing letters in great

haste for this express, but when the door opened, and she saw Helen, she threw wax and letter from her, and pushing aside the sofa-table, came forward to receive her with open arms.

All was in an instant happy in Helen's heart; but there was the man of the letter-box; he must be attended to. "Beg your pardon, Helen, my dear—one moment. Letters must be finished—great consequence."

By the time the letters were finished, before they were gone, Lady Cecilia came in. The same as ever, with affectionate delight in her eyes—her beautiful eyes. The same, yes, the same Cecilia as ever; yet different: less of a girl, less lively, but more happy. The moment she had embraced her, Lady Cecilia turned quick to present General Clarendon, thinking he had followed, but he had stopped in the hall.

"Send off the letters," were the first words of his which Helen heard. The tone commanding, the voice remarkably gentlemanlike. An instant afterwards he came in. A fine figure, a handsome man; in the prime of life;

with a high-born, high-bred military air. English decidedly — proudly English. Something of the old school — composed self-possession, with voluntary deference to others—rather distant. Helen felt that his manner of welcoming her to Clarendon Park was perfectly polite, yet she would have liked it better had it been less polite—more cordial. Lady Cecilia, whose eyes were anxiously upon her, drew her arm within her's, and hurried her out of the room. She stopped at the foot of the stairs, gathered up the folds of her riding-dress, and turning suddenly to Helen, with her vivacious manner, said,

"Helen, my dear, you must not think *that*"——

"Think what?" said Helen.

"Think *that*—for which you are now blushing. Oh, you know what I mean! Helen, your thoughts are just as legible in your face, as they always were to me. His manner is reserved—cold, may be — but not his heart. Understand this, pray—once for all. Do you? will you, dearest Helen?"

"I do, I will," cried Helen; and every

minute she felt more perfectly to understand and to be more perfectly pleased with her friend. Lady Cecilia shewed her through the apartment destined for her, which she had taken the greatest pleasure in arranging: every thing there was not only most comfortable, but particularly to her taste; and some little delicate proofs of affection, recollections of childhood, were there; — keepsakes, early drawings, nonsensical things, not worth preserving, but still preserved: — they said so much, and so tenderly, to Helen's heart!

"Look how near we are together," said Cecilia, opening a door into her own dressing-room. You may shut this up whenever you please, but I hope you will never please to do so. You see how I leave you your own free will, as friends usually do, with a proviso, a hope at least, that you are never to use it on any account—like the child's half-guinea pocket-money, never to be changed."

Her playful tone relieved, as she intended it should, Helen's too keen emotion; and this too was felt with the quickness with which every touch of kindness ever was felt by her.

Helen pressed her friend's hand, and smiled without speaking.

They were to be some time alone before the commencement of bridal visits, and an expected succession of troops of friends. This was a time of peculiar enjoyment to Helen: she had leisure to grow happy in the feeling of reviving hopes from old associations.

She did not forget her promise to write to Mrs. Collingwood; nor afterwards (to her credit be it here marked)—even when the house was full of company, and when, by amusement or by feeling, she was most pressed for time—did she ever omit to write to those excellent friends. Those who best know the difficulty will best appreciate this proof of the reality of her gratitude.

As Lady Cecilia was a great deal with her husband riding or walking, Helen had opportunities of being much alone with Lady Davenant, who now gave her a privilege that she had enjoyed in former times at Cecilhurst, that of entering her apartment in the morning at all hours without fear of being considered an intruder

The first morning however, on seeing her ladyship immersed in papers with a brow of care, deeply intent, Helen paused on the threshold, "I am afraid I interrupt — I am afraid I disturb you."

"Come in, Helen, come in," cried Lady Davenant, looking up, and the face of care was cleared, and there was a radiance of pleasure— "Interrupt—yes: disturb—no. Often in your little life, Helen, you have interrupted—never disturbed me. From the time you were a child till this moment, never did I see you come into my room without pleasure."

Then sweeping away heaps of papers, she made room for Helen on the sofa beside her.

"Now tell me how things are with you — somewhat I have heard reported of my friend the Dean's affairs—tell me all."

Helen told all as briefly as possible; she hurried on through her uncle's affairs with a tremulous voice, and before she could come to a conclusion Lady Davenant exclaimed,

"I foresaw it long since: with all my friend's virtues, all his talents — but we will not go back upon the painful past. You, my dear

Helen, have done just what I should have expected from you,—right;—right, too, the condition Mr. Collingwood has made—very right. And now to the next point:—where are you to live, Helen? or rather with whom?"

Helen was not quite sure yet, she said she had not quite determined.

"Am I to understand that your doubt lies between the Collingwoods and my daughter?"

"Yes; Cecilia most kindly invited me, but I do not know General Clarendon yet, and he does not know me yet. Cecilia might wish most sincerely that I should live with her, and I am convinced she does; but her husband must be considered."

"True," said Lady Davenant—true; a husband is certainly a thing *to be cared for*—in Scottish phrase, and General Clarendon is no doubt a person to be considered,—but it seems that I am not a person to be considered in your arrangements."

Even the altered, dry, and almost acrid tone in which Lady Davenant spoke, and the expression of disappointment in her countenance

—were, as marks of strong affection, deeply gratifying to Helen. Lady Davenant went on.

"Was not Cecilhurst always a home to you, Helen Stanley?"

"Yes, yes,—always a most happy home!"

"Then why is not Cecilhurst to be your home?"

"My dear Lady Davenant! how kind!—how very, very kind of you to wish it—but I never thought of——"

"And why did not you think of it, Helen?"

"I mean—I thought you were going to Russia."

"And have you settled, my dear Helen," said Lady Davenant, smiling, "have you settled that I am never to come back from Russia? Do not you know that you are—that you ever were—you ever will be to me a daughter?" and drawing Helen fondly towards her, she added, "as my own very dear—I must not say dear*est* child,—must not, because as I well remember once—little creature as you were then—you whispered to me, 'Never call me dear*est*,'—generous-hearted child!" And tears started into her eyes as she spoke; but at that moment

came a knock at the door. "A packet from Lord Davenant, by Mr. Mapletofft, my lady."

Helen rose to leave the room, but Lady Davenant laid a detaining hand upon her, saying, "You will not be in my way in the least;" and she opened her packet, adding, that while she read, Helen might amuse herself "with arranging the books on that table, or in looking over the letters in that portfolio."

Helen had hitherto seen Lady Davenant only with the eyes of very early youth; but now, after an absence of two years—a great space in her existence, it seemed as if she looked upon her with new eyes, and every hour made fresh discoveries in her character. Contrary to what too often happens when we again see and judge of those whom we have early known, Lady Davenant's character and abilities, instead of sinking and diminishing, appeared to rise and enlarge, to expand and be ennobled to Helen's view. Strong lights and shades there were, but these only excited and fixed her attention. Even her defects—those inequalities of temper of which she had already had some example, were interesting as evidences of the power and warmth of her affections.

The books on the table were those which Lady Davenant had had in her travelling carriage. They gave Helen an idea of the range and variety of the reader's mind. Some of them were presentation copies, as they are called, from several of the first authors of our own, and foreign countries; some with dedications to Lady Davenant; others with inscriptions expressing respect or propitiating favour, or anxious for judgment.

The portfolio contained letters whose very signatures would have driven the first of modern autograph collectors distracted with joy — whose meanest scrap would make a scrap-book the envy of the world.

But among the letters in this portfolio, there were none of those nauseous notes of compliment, none of those epistles adulatory, degrading to those who write, and equally to those by whom they are produced; letters which are, however cleverly turned (Pope's included), inexpressibly wearisome to all but the parties concerned.

After opening and looking at the signature of several of these letters, Helen sat in a de-

lightful *embarras de richesse*. To read them all—all at once, was impossible; with which to begin, she could not determine. One after another was laid aside as too good to be read first, and after glancing at the contents of each, she began to deal them round alphabetically till she was struck by a passage in one of them —she looked to the signature, it was unknown to fame—she read the whole, it was striking and interesting. There were several letters in the same hand, and Helen was surprised to find them arranged according to their dates, in Lady Davenant's own writing—preserved with those of persons of illustrious reputation! These she read on without further hesitation. There was no sort of affectation in them—quite easy and natural, "real feeling, and genius," certainly genius, she thought!—and there seemed something romantic and uncommon in the character of the writer. They were signed Granville Beauclerc?

Who could he be, this Granville Beauclerc? She read on till Lady Davenant, having finished her packet, rang a silver handbell, as was her custom, to summon her page. At the first tingle of the bell Helen started, and Lady

Davenant asked, "Whose letter, my dear, has so completely abstracted you?"

Carlos, the page, came in at this instant, and after a quick glance at the hand-writing of the letters, Lady Davenant gave her orders in Portuguese to Carlos, and then returning to Helen, took no further notice of the letters, but went on just where she had left off. "Helen, I remember when you were about nine years old, timid as you usually were, your coming forward, bold as a little lion, to attack me in Cecilia's defence; I forget the particulars, but I recollect that you said I was *unjust*, and that I did not know Cecilia, and there you were right; so, to reward you, you shall see that now I do her perfect justice, and that I am as fond of her as your heart can wish. I really never did know Cecilia till I saw her heartily in love; I had imagined her incapable of real love; I thought the desire of pleasing universally had been her ruling passion—the ruling passion that, of a little mind and a cold heart; but I did her wrong. In another more material point, too, I was mistaken."

Lady Davenant paused and looked earnestly at Helen, whose eyes said I am glad, and yet she was not quite certain she knew to what she alluded.

"Cecilia righted herself, and won my good opinion, by the openness with which she treated me from the very commencement of her attachment to General Clarendon."

Lady Davenant again paused to reflect, and played for some moments with the tablets in her hand.

"Some one says that we are apt to flatter ourselves that we leave our faults when our faults leave us, from change of situation, age, and so forth; and perhaps it does not signify much which it is, if the faults are fairly gone, and if there be no danger of their returning: all our former misunderstandings arose on Cecilia's part from cowardice of character; on mine from—no matter what—no matter either which of us was most wrong."

"True, true," cried Helen eagerly; and, anxious to prevent recurrence to painful recollections, she went on to ask rapidly several questions about Cecilia's marriage.

Lady Davenant smiled, and promised that she should have the whole history of the marriage in true gossip detail.

"When I wrote to you, I gave you some general ideas on the subject, but there are little things which could not well be written, even to so safe a young friend as you are, for what is written remains, and often for those by whom it was never intended to be seen; the *dessoux des cartes* can seldom be either safely or satisfactorily shewn on paper, so give me my embroidery-frame, I never can tell well without having something to do with my hands."

And as Helen set the embroidery-frame, Lady Davenant searched for some skeins of silk and silk winders.

"Take these, my dear, and wind this silk for me, for I must have my hearer comfortably established, not like the agonized listener in the 'World' leaning against a table, with the corner running into him all the time."

## CHAPTER IV.

"I MUST go back," continued Lady Davenant; "quite to the dark ages, the time when I knew nothing of my daughter's character but by the accidental lights which you afforded me. I will take up my story before the Reformation, in the Middle ages, when you and your dear uncle left us at Florence; about two years ago, when Cecilia was in the height of her conquests, about the time when a certain Colonel D'Aubigny flourished, you remember him?"

Helen answered "Yes," rather in a constrained voice, which caused Lady Davenant to look up, and on seeing that look of inquiry, Helen coloured, though she would have given the world not to be so foolish. The affair was Cecilia's, and Helen only wished not to have it recurred to, and yet she had now, by colouring, done the very thing to fix Lady Dave-

nant's attention, and as the look was prolonged, she coloured more and more.

"I see I was wrong," said Lady Davenant; "I had thought Colonel D'Aubigny's ecstasy about that miniature of you was only a feint; but I see he really was an admirer of yours, Helen?"

"Of mine! oh no, never!" Still from her fear of saying something that should implicate Cecilia, her tone, though she spoke exactly the truth, was not to Lady Davenant's discriminative ear quite natural—Helen seeing doubt, added,

"Impossible, my dear Lady Davenant! you know I was then so young, quite a child!"

"No, no, not quite; two from eighteen and sixteen remain, I think, and in our days sixteen is not absolutely a child."

Helen made no answer; her thoughts had gone back to the time when Colonel D'Aubigny was first introduced to her, which was just before her uncle's illness, and when her mind had been so engrossed by him, that she had but a confused recollection of all the rest.

"Now you are right, my dear," said Lady

Davenant; "right to be absolutely silent. In difficult cases say nothing; but still you are wrong in sitting so uneasily under it, for that seems as if there *was* something."

"Nothing upon earth!" cried Helen, "if you would not look at me *so*, my dear Lady Davenant."

"Then, my dear Helen, do not break my embroidery silk; that jerk was imprudent, and trust me, my dear, the screw of that silk winder is not so much to blame as you would have me think; take patience with yourself and with me. There is no great harm done, no unbearable imputation, you are not accused of loving or liking, only of having been admired."

"Never!" cried Helen.

"Well, well! it does not signify in the least now; the man is either dying or dead."

"I am glad of it," cried Helen.

"How barbarous!" said Lady Davenant, "but let it pass, I am neither glad nor sorry; contempt is more dignified and safer than hatred, my dear.

"Now to return to Cecilia; soon after, I will not say the D'Aubigny era, but soon after

you left us, I fell sick, Cecilia was excessively kind to me. In kindness her affectionate heart never failed, and I felt this the more, from a consciousness that I had been a little harsh to her. I recovered but slowly; I could not bear to have her confined so long in a sick room, and yet I did not much like either of the chaperons with whom she went out, though they were both of rank, and of unimpeachable character—the one English, one of the best women in the world, but the most stupid; the other a foreigner, one of the most agreeable women in the world, but the most false. I prevailed on Cecilia to break off that—I do not know what to call it, friendship it was not, and my daughter and I drew nearer together. Better times began to dawn, but still there was little sympathy between us; my mind was intent on Lord Davenant's interests, her's on amusement and admiration. Her conquests were numerous, and she gloried in their number, for, between you and me, Cecilia was, before the reformation, not a little of a coquette. You will not allow it, you did not see it, you did not go out with her, and being three or four

years younger, you could not be a very good critic of Cecilia's conduct; and depend upon it I am right, she was not a little of a coquette. She did not know, and I am sure I did not know, that she had a heart, till she became acquainted with General Clarendon.

"The first time we met him," — observing a quickening of attention in Helen's eyes, Lady Davenant smiled and said, "Young ladies always like to hear of 'the first time we saw him.'—The first time we saw General Clarendon was—forgive me the day of the month—in the gallery at Florence. I forget how it happened that he had not been presented to me — to Lord Davenant he must have been. But so it was, and it was new to Cecilia to see a man of his appearance who had not on his first arrival shewn himself ambitious to be made known to her. He was admiring a beautiful Magdalene, and he was standing with his back towards us. I recollect that his appearance when I saw him as a stranger — the time when one can best judge of appearance, struck me as that of a distinguished person, but little did

I think that there stood Cecilia's husband! so little did my maternal instinct guide me.

"As we approached, he turned and gave one look at Cecilia; she gave one look at him. He passed on, she stopped me to examine the picture which he had been admiring.

"Every English mother at Florence, except myself, had their eyes fixed upon General Clarendon from the moment of his arrival. But whatever I may have been, or may have been supposed to be, on the great squares of politics, I believe I never have been accused or even suspected of being a manœuvrer on the small domestic scale.

"My reputation for imbecility in these matters was perhaps advantageous. He did not shun me as he did the tribe of knowing ones; a hundred reports flew about concerning him, settling in one, that he was resolved never to marry. Yet he was a passionate admirer of beauty and grace, and it was said that he had never been unsuccessful where he had wished to please. The secret of his resolution against marriage was accounted for by the gossiping public in many ways variously absurd.

The fact was, that in his own family, and in that of a particular friend, there had been about this time two or three scandalous intrigues, followed by 'the public brand of shameful life.' One of these 'sad affairs,' as they are styled, was marked with premeditated treachery and turpitude. The lady had been, or had seemed to be, for years a pattern wife, the mother of several children; yet she had long betrayed, and at last abandoned, a most amiable and confiding husband, and went off with a man who did not love her, who cared for nought but himself, a disgusting monster of selfishness, vanity, and vice! This woman was said to have been once good, but to have been corrupted and depraved by residence abroad—by the contagion of foreign profligacy. In the other instance, the seduced wife had been originally most amiable, pure-minded, uncommonly beautiful, loved to idolatry by her husband, Clarendon's particular friend, a man high in public estimation. The husband shot himself. The seducer was, it is said, the lady's first love. That these circumstances should have made a deep impression on Cla-

rendon, is natural; the more feeling—the stronger the mind, the more deep and lasting it was likely to be. Besides his resolution against marriage in general, we heard that he had specially resolved against marrying any travelled lady, and most especially against any woman with whom there was danger of a first love. How this danger was to be avoided or ascertained, mothers and daughters looked at one another, and did not ask, or at least did not answer.

" Cecilia, apparently unconcerned, heard and laughed at these high resolves, after her gay fashion with her young companions, and marvelled how long the resolution would be kept. General Clarendon of course could not but be introduced to us, could not but attend our assemblies, nor could he avoid meeting us in all the good English and foreign society at Florence; but whenever he met us, he always kept at a safe distance: this caution marked his sense of danger. To avoid its being so construed, perhaps, he made approaches to me, politely cold; we talked very wisely on the state of the Continent and the affairs of Europe;

I did not, however, confine myself or him to politics, I gave him many unconscious opportunities of shewing in conversation, not his abilities, for they are nothing extraordinary; but his character, which is first-rate. Gleams came out, of a character born to subjugate, to captivate, to attach for life. It worked first on Cecilia's curiosity; she thought she was only curious, and she listened at first, humming an opera air between times, with the least concerned look conceivable. But her imagination was caught, and thenceforward through everything that everybody else might be saying, and through all she said herself, she heard every word that fell from our General, and even all that was repeated of his saying at second or third hand. So she learned in due season that he had seen women as handsome, handsomer than Lady Cecilia Davenant; but that there was something in her manner peculiarly suited to his taste — his fastidious taste! so free from coquetry, he said she was. And true, perfectly true, from the time he became acquainted with her; no hypocrisy on her part, no mistake on his; at the first touch

of a real love, there was an end of vanity and coquetry. Then her deference—her affection for her mother, was so charming, he thought; such perfect confidence — such quick intelligence between us. No deceit here either, only a little self-deception on Cecilia's part. She had really grown suddenly fonder of me; what had become of her fear, she did not know. But I knew full well my new charm and my real merit; I was a good and safe conductor of the electric shock.

"It chanced one day, when I was listening only as one listens to a man who is talking at another through oneself, I did not immediately catch the meaning, or I believe hear what the General said. Cecilia, unawares, answered for me, and showed that she perfectly understood:—he bowed—she blushed.

"Man is usually quicksighted to woman's blushes. But our General was not vain, only proud; the blush he did not set down to his own account, but very much to hers. It was a proof, he thought, of so much simplicity of heart, so unspoiled by the world, so unlike—in short, so like the very woman he had painted

in his fancy, before he knew too much of women. Lady Cecilia was now a perfect angel. Not one word of all this did he say, but it was understood quite as well as if it had been spoken: his lips were firm compressed, and the whole outer man composed—frigidly cold;—yet through all this Cecilia saw—such is woman's penetration in certain cases—Cecilia saw what must sooner or later happen. He, still proud of his prudence, refrained from word, look, or sigh, resolved to be impassive till his judgment should be perfectly satisfied. At last this judgment was perfectly satisfied; that is, he was passionately in love—fairly 'caught,' my dear, 'in the strong toils of grace,' and he threw himself at Cecilia's feet. She was not quite so much surprised as he expected, but more pleased than he had ventured to hope. There was that, however, in his proud humility, which told Cecilia there must be no trifling.

He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who fears to put it to the touch,
To win or lose it all.'

He put it to the test, and won it all. General Clarendon, indeed, is a man likely to win and keep the love of woman, for this, among other good reasons, that love and honour being with him inseparable, the idol he adores must keep herself at the height to which he has raised her, or cease to receive his adoration. She must be no common vulgar idol for every passing worshipper."

As Lady Davenant paused, Helen looked up, hesitated, and said: "I hope that General Clarendon is not disposed to jealousy."

"No: he 's too proud to be jealous," replied Lady Davenant.

Are proud men never jealous? thought Helen.

"I mean," continued Lady Davenant, "that General Clarendon is too proud to be jealous of his wife. For aught I know, he might have felt jealousy of Cecilia before she was his, for then she was but a woman, like another: but once HIS—once having set his judgment on the cast, both the virtues and the defects of his character join in security for his perfect confidence in the wife 'his choice and passion

both approve.' From temper and principle he is unchangeable. I acknowledge that I think the General is a little inclined perhaps to obstinacy; but, as Burke says, though obstinacy is certainly a vice, it happens that the whole line of the great and masculine virtues, constancy, fidelity, fortitude, magnanimity, are closely allied to this disagreeable quality, of which we have so just an abhorrence.

"It is most peculiarly happy for Cecilia that she has a husband of this firm character, one on whom she can rely—one to whom she may, she must, look up, if not always, yet upon all important occasions where decision is necessary, or integrity required. It is between her and her General as it should be in marriage, each has the compensating qualities to those which the other possesses: General Clarendon is inferior to Cecilia in wit, but superior in judgment; inferior in literature, superior in knowledge of the world; inferior to my daughter altogether in abilities, in what is called genius, but far superior in that ruling power, *strength of mind.* Strength of mind is an attaching as well as a ruling power: all human creatures,

women especially, become attached to those who have power over their minds. Yes, Helen, I am satisfied with their marriage, and with your congratulations: yours are the sort I like. Vulgar people — by vulgar people I mean all who think vulgarly — very great vulgar people have congratulated me upon this establishment of my daughter's fortune and future rank (a dukedom in view), all that could be wished in worldly estimation. But I rejoice in it as the security for my daughter's character and happiness. Thank you again, my dear young friend, for your sympathy; *you* can understand me, *you* can feel with me."

Sympathy, intelligent, quick, warm, unwearied, unweariable, such as Helen's, is really a charming accomplishment in a friend; the only obligation a proud person is never too proud to receive; and it was most gratifying to Helen to be allowed to sympathize with Lady Davenant — one who, in general, never spoke of herself, or unveiled her private feelings, even to those who lived with her on terms of intimacy. Helen felt responsible for the confidence granted to her thus upon credit, and

a strong ambition was excited in her mind to justify the high opinion her superior friend had formed of her. She determined to become all that she was believed to be; as the flame of a taper suddenly rises towards what is held over it, her spirit mounted to the point to which her friend wished her to aspire.

## CHAPTER V

HELEN'S perfect happiness at Clarendon Park, was not of long duration. People who have not been by nature blessed or cursed with nice feelings, or who have well rubbed off their delicacy in roughing through the world, can be quite happy, or at least happy enough without ascertaining whether they are really esteemed or liked by those with whom they live. Many, and some of high degree, when well sheltered and fed, and provided with all the necessaries, and surrounded by all the luxuries of life, and with appearances tolerably well kept up by outward manner, care little or nought about the inside sentiments.

But Helen was neither of the case-hardened philosophic, or the naturally obtuse-feeling class; she belonged to the over-anxious. Surrounded at Clarendon Park with all the splen-

dour of life, and with the immediate expectation of seeing and being seen by the first society in England; with the certainty also of being tenderly loved and highly esteemed by two of the persons she was living with, yet a doubt about the third began to make her miserable. Whether General Clarendon really liked her or not, was a question that hung upon her mind sometimes as a dead weight—then vibrating backwards and forwards, she often called to mind and endeavoured to believe what Cecilia the first day told her, that this reserved manner was natural to him with strangers, and would wear off. But to her the icy coldness did not thaw. So she felt, or so she fancied, and which it was she could not decide. She had never before lived with any one about whose liking for her she could doubt, therefore, as she said to herself, "I know I am a bad judge." She feared to open her mind to Cecilia. Lady Davenant would be the safest person to consult, yet Helen, with all her young delicacy fresh about her, scrupled, and could not screw her courage to the sticking-place. Every morning going to Lady Davenant's room,

she half resolved and yet came away without speaking. At last, one morning, she began:

"You said something the other day, my dear Lady Davenant, about a visit from Miss Clarendon. Perhaps—I am afraid—in short I think,—I fear, the General does not like my being here; and I thought, perhaps, he was displeased at his sister's not being here,—that he thought Cecilia's having asked me prevented his sister's coming; but then you told me he was not of a jealous temper, did not you?"

"*Distinguez*," said Lady Davenant; "*distinguons*, as the old French metaphysicians used to say, *distinguons*, there be various kinds of jealousy, as of love. The old romancers make a distinction between *amour* and *amour par amours*. Whatever that mean, I beg leave to take a distinction full as intelligible, I trust, between *jalousie par amour*, and *jalousie par amitié*. Now, to apply; when I told you that our General was not subject to jealousy, I should have distinguished, and said, *jalousie par amour*—jealousy in love, but I will not ensure him against *jalousie par amitié*—jealousy in friendship—of friends and re-

lations, I mean. Methinks I have seen symptoms of this in the General, he does not like my influence over Cecilia, nor yours, my dear."

"I understand it all," exclaimed Helen, "and I was right from the very first; I saw he disliked me, and he ever will and must dislike and detest me — I see it in every look, hear it in every word, in every tone."

"Now, my dear Helen, if you are riding off on your imagination, I wish you a pleasant ride, and till you come back again I will write my letters," said Lady Davenant, taking up a pen.

Helen begged pardon, and protested she was not going to ride off upon any imagination, — she had no imagination now, — she entreated Lady Davenant to go on, for she was very anxious to know the whole truth, whatever it might be. Lady Davenant laid down her pen, and told her all she knew. In the first place, that Cecilia did not like Miss Clarendon, who, though a very estimable person, had a sort of uncompromising sincerity, joined with a *brusquerie* of manner which Cecilia could not endure. How her daughter had managed matters to refuse the sister without offending

the brother, Lady Davenant said she did not know; that was Cecilia's secret, and probably it lay in her own charming manner of doing things, aided by the whole affair having occurred a few days before marriage, when nothing could be taken ill of the bride elect. "The General, as Cecilia told me, desired that she would write to invite you, Helen; she did so, and I am very glad of it. This is all I know of this mighty matter."

But Helen could not endure the idea of being there, contrary to the General's wishes, in the place of the sister he loved. Oh, how very, very unfortunate she was to have all her hopes blighted, destroyed — and Cecilia's kindness all in vain. Dear, dear Cecilia!—but for the whole world Helen would not be so selfish—she would not run the hazard of making mischief. *She* would never use her influence over Cecilia in opposition to the General. Oh, how little he knew of her character, if he thought it possible.

Helen had now come to tears. Then the keen sense of injustice turned to indignation, and the tears wiped away and pride prevailing, colouring she exclaimed, "That she knew

what she ought to do, she knew what she would do—she would not stay where the master of the house did not wish for her. Orphan though she was, she could not accept of protection or obligation from any human being who neither liked or esteemed her. She would shorten her visit at Clarendon Park—make it as short as his heart could desire,—she would never be the cause of any disagreement—poor, dear, kind Cecilia! She would write directly to Mrs. Collingwood."

At the close of these last incoherent sentences, Helen was awe-struck by the absolute composed immovability and silence of Lady Davenant. Helen stood rebuked before her.

"Instead of writing to Mrs. Collingwood, had not you better go at once?" said her ladyship, speaking in a voice so calm, and in a tone so slightly ironical, that it might have passed for earnest on any but an acutely feeling ear—"Shall I ring and order your carriage?" putting her hand on the bell as she spoke, and resting it there, she continued—"It would be so spirited to be off instantly; so wise, so polite, so considerate towards *dear* Cecilia—

so dignified towards the General, and so kind towards me, who am going to a far country, Helen, and may perhaps not see you ever again."

"Forgive me!" cried Helen; "I never could go while you were here."

"I did not know what you might think proper when you seemed to have lost your senses."

"I have recovered them," said Helen; "I will do whatever you please — whatever you think best."

"It must not be what I please, my dear child, nor what I think best; but what you judge for yourself to be best; else what will become of you when I am in Russia? It must be some higher and more stable principle of action that must govern you. It must not be the mere wish to please this or that friend;—the defect of your character, Helen, remember I tell you, is this — inordinate desire to be loved, this impatience of not being loved — that which but a moment ago made you ready to abandon two of the best friends you have upon earth, because you imagine, or you suspect,

or you fear, that a third person, almost a stranger, does not like before he has had time to know you."

"I was very foolish," said Helen; "but now I will be wise, I will do whatever is—right. Surely you would not have me live here if I were convinced that the master of the house did not wish it?"

"Certainly not — certainly not," repeated Lady Davenant; "but let us see our way before us; never gallop, my dear, much less leap; never move, 'till you see your way;—once it is ascertained that General Clarendon does not wish you to be here, nor approve of you for the chosen companion of his wife, I as your best friend would say, begone, and speed you on your way; then as much pride, as much spirit as you will; but those who are conscious of possessing real spirit, should never be — seldom are—in a hurry to shew it, that kind of ostentatious haste is undignified in man, and ungraceful in woman."

Helen promised that she would be patience itself: "But tell me exactly," said she, "what you would have me do."

"Nothing," said Lady Davenant.

"Nothing! that is easy at least," said Helen smiling.

"No, not so easy as you imagine; it requires sometimes no small share of strength of mind."

"Strength of mind!" said Helen, "I am afraid I have not any."

"Acquire it then, my dear," said her friend.

"But can I?"

"Certainly; strength of mind, like strength of body, is improved by exercise."

"If I had any to begin with—" said Helen.

"You have some, Helen, a great deal in one particular, else why should I have any more regard for you, or more hope of you, than of any other well-dressed, well-taught beauty, any of the tribe of young ladies who pass before me without ever fixing my mind's eye for one moment?"

"But in what particular, my dear Lady Davenant, do you mean?" said Helen anxiously; "I am afraid you are mistaken; in what do you think I ever shewed strength of mind? Tell me, and I will tell you the truth."

"That you will, and there is the point that

I mean. Ever since I have known you, you have always, as at this moment, coward as you are, been brave enough to speak the truth; and truth I believe to be the only real lasting foundation for friendship; in all but truth there is a principle of decay and dissolution. Now good b'ye, my dear;—stay, one word more —there is a line in some classic poet, which says 'the suspicion of ill-will never fails to produce it.'—Remember this in your intercourse with General Clarendon; shew no suspicion of his bearing you ill-will, and to shew none, you must feel none. Put absolutely out of your head all that you may have heard or imagined about Miss Clarendon, or her brother's prejudices on her account."

"I will—I will indeed," said Helen, and so they parted.

A few words have sometimes a material influence on events in human life. Perhaps even among those who hold in general that advice never does good, there is no individual who cannot recollect some few words—some conversation which has altered the future colour of their lives.

Helen's over-anxiety concerning General Clarendon's opinion of her, being now balanced by the higher interest Lady Davenant had excited, she met him with new-born courage; and Lady Cecilia, not that she suspected it was necessary, but merely by way of prevention, threw in little douceurs of flattery, on the General's part, repeated sundry pretty compliments, and really kind things which he had said to her of Helen. These always pleased Helen at the moment, but she could never make what she was told he said of her, quite agree with what he said to her: indeed he said so very little, that no absolute discrepancy could be detected between the words spoken, and the words reported to have been said; but still the looks did not agree with the opinions, or the cordiality implied.

One morning Lady Cecilia told her that the General wished that she would ride out with them, "and you must come, indeed you must, and try his pretty Zelica; he wishes it of all things, he told me so last night."

The General chancing to come in as she spoke, Lady Cecilia appealed to him with a

look that almost called upon him to enforce her request; but he only said that if Miss Stanley would do him the honour, he should certainly be happy, if Zelica would not be too much for her; but he could not take it upon him to advise. Then looking for some paper, of which he came in search, and passing her with the most polite and deferential manner possible, he left the room.

Half vexed, half smiling, Helen looked at Cecilia, and asked whether all she had told her, was not a little—"*plus belle que la verité.*"

Lady Cecilia, blushing slightly, poured out rapid protestations that all she had ever repeated to Helen of the General's sayings was perfect truth—"I will not swear to the words—because in the first place it is not pretty to swear, and next, because I never can recollect anybody's words, or my own, five minutes after they have been said."

Partly by playfulness, and partly by protestations, Lady Cecilia half convinced Helen; but from this time she refrained from repeating compliments which, true or false, did no good, and things went on better: observing this, she

left them to their natural course, upon all such occasions the best way.

And now visiters began to appear, and some officers of the General's staff arrived. Clarendon Park happened to be in the district which General Clarendon commanded, so that he was able usually to reside there. It was in what is called a good neighbourhood, and there was much visiting, and many entertainments.

One day at dinner, Helen was seated between the General and a fine young guardsman, who, as far as his deep sense of his own merit, and his fashionable indifference to young ladies would permit, had made some demonstrations of a desire to attract her notice. He was piqued when, in the midst of something he had wonderfully exerted himself to say, he observed that her attention was distracted by a gentleman opposite, who had just returned from the Continent, and who among other pieces of news, marriages and deaths of English abroad, mentioned that "poor D'Aubigny" was at last dead.

Helen looked first at Cecilia, who, as she saw, heard what was said with perfect compo-

sure; and then at Lady Davenant, who had meantime glanced imperceptibly at her daughter, and then upon Helen, whose eyes she met —and Helen coloured merely from association, because she had coloured before — provoking! yet impossible to help it. All passed in less time than it can be told, and Helen had left the guardsman in the midst of his sentence, discomfited, and his eyes were now upon her; and in confusion she turned from him, and there were the General's eyes; but he was only inviting her to taste some particular wine, which he thought she would like, and which she willingly accepted, and praised, though she assuredly did not know in the least what manner of taste it had. The General now exerted himself to occupy the guardsman in a conversation about promotion, and drew all observation from Helen. Yet not the slightest indication of having seen, heard, or understood, appeared in his countenance, not the least curiosity or interest about Colonel D'Aubigny. Of one point Helen was however intuitively certain, that he had noticed that confusion which he had so ably, so coolly covered.

One ingenuous look from her thanked him, and his look in return was most gratifying; she could not tell how it was, but it appeared more as if he understood and liked her than any look she had ever seen from him before. They were both more at their ease. Next day, he certainly justified all Cecilia's former assurances, by the urgency with which he desired to have her of the riding party. He put her on horseback himself, bade the aid-de-camp ride on with Lady Cecilia—three several times set the bridle right in Miss Stanley's hand, assuring her that she need not be afraid, that Zelica was the gentlest creature possible, and he kept his fiery horse, Fleetfoot, to a pace that suited her during the whole time they were out. Helen took courage, and her ride did her a vast deal of good.

The rides were repeated, the General evidently became more and more interested about Miss Stanley; he appealed continually to her taste, and marked that he considered her as part of his family; but, as Helen told Lady Davenant, it was difficult, with a person of his high-bred manners and reserved temper, to as-

certain what was to be attributed to general deference to her sex, what to particular regard for the individual, how much to hospitality to his guest, or attention to his wife's friend, and what might be considered as proof of his own desire to share that friendship, and of a real wish that she should continue to live with them.

While she was in this uncertainty, Lord Davenant arrived from London; he had always been fond of Helen, and now the great changes which had taken place since they had met last, the first sight of her youthful figure in deep mourning, touched him to the heart—he folded her in his arms, and was unable to speak. He! a great bulky man, with a face of constitutional joy—but so it was; he had a tender heart, strong feelings of all kinds under an appearance of *insouciance* which deceived the world. He was distinguished as a political leader—but, as he said of himself, he had been three times inoculated with ambition—once by his mother, once by his brother, and once by his wife; but it had never taken well; the last the best however,—it had shown at least sufficiently to satisfy his friends, and he was happy

to be no more tormented. With talents of the first order, and integrity unblenching, his character was not of that stern stuff — no, not of that corrupt stuff — of which modern ambition should be made.

He had now something to tell Helen, which he would say even before he opened his London budget of news. He told her, with a congratulatory smile, that he had had an opportunity of shewing his sense of Mr. Collingwood's merits; and as he spoke he put a letter into her hand.

The letter was from her good friend Mr. Collingwood. A vacant bishopric in the West Indies had been offered to him, and in his answer to Lord Davenant, who had been empowered to make the offer, Mr Collingwood, after saying all that was proper of gratitude, unworthiness, and the good of the church, accepted the bishopric, and enclosed a letter for Helen, and a most kind letter it was, desiring that she would let him know immediately and decidedly (before their own plans were further determined) where and with whom she intended to live: and there was a post-

script from Mrs. Collingwood, full of affection, and doubts, and hopes, and fears.

The moment Helen had finished this letter, without seeming to regard the enquiring looks of all present, and without once looking towards any one else, she walked deliberately up to General Clarendon, and begged to speak to him alone. Never was General more surprised, but of course he was too much of a general to let that appear. Without a word, he offered his arm, and led her to his study; he drew a chair towards her—

"No misfortune, I hope, Miss Stanley? If I can in any way be of service——"

"The only service, General Clarendon," said Helen, her manner becoming composed, and her voice steadying as she went on—"the only service you can do me now is to tell me the plain truth, and this will prevent what would certainly be a misfortune to me—perhaps to all of us. Will you read this letter?"

He received it with an air of great interest, and again moved the chair to her. Before she sat down, she added—

"I am unused to the world, you see, General

Clarendon. I have been accustomed to live with one who always told me his mind sincerely, so that I could judge always what I ought to do. Will you do so now? It is the greatest service, as well as favour, you can do me."

"Depend upon it, I will," said General Clarendon.

"I should not ask you to tell me in words —that might be painful to your politeness; only let me see it," said Helen, and she sat down.

The General read on without speaking, till he came to the mention of Helen's original promise of living with the Collingwoods. He did not comprehend that passage, he said, shewing it to her. He had always, on the contrary, understood that it had been a long *settled* thing, a promise between Miss Stanley and Lady Cecilia, that Helen should live with Lady Cecilia when she married.

"No such thing!" Helen said. "No such agreement had ever been made."

So the General now perceived; but this was a mistake of his which he hoped would make

no difference in her arrangements, he said: "Why should it?—unless Miss Stanley felt unhappy at Clarendon Park?"

He paused, and Helen was silent: then, taking desperate resolution, she answered—

"I should be perfectly happy here, if I were sure of your wishes, your feelings about me—about it."

"Is it possible that there has been any thing in my manner," said he, "that could give Miss Stanley pain? What could have put a doubt into her mind?"

"There might be some other person nearer, and naturally dearer to you," said Helen, looking up in his face ingenuously — "one whom you might have desired to have in my place:—your sister, Miss Clarendon, in short."

"Did Cecilia tell you of this?"

"No, Lady Davenant did; and since I heard it, I never could be happy—I never can be happy till I know your feeling."

His manner instantly changed.

"You shall know my feelings, then," said he. "Till I knew you, Helen, my wish was, that my sister should live with my wife; now

I know you, my wish is, that you should live with us. You will suit Cecilia better than my sister could — will suit us both better, having the same truth of character, and more gentleness of manner. I have answered you with frankness equal to your own. And now," said he, taking her hand, " you know Cecilia has always considered you as her sister—allow me to do the same: consider me as a brother—such you shall find me. Thank you. This is settled for life," added he, drawing her arm through his, and taking up her letters, he led her back towards the library.

But her emotion, the stronger for being suppressed, was too great for reappearing in company; she withdrew her arm from his when they were passing through the hall, and turning her face away, she had just voice enough to beg he would shew her letters to ——

He understood. She ran up-stairs to her own room, glad to be alone; a flood of joy came over her.

"A brother in Cecilia's husband!—a brother!"

The word had a magical charm, and she could not help repeating it aloud — she wept

like a child. Lady Cecilia soon came flying in, all delight and affection, reproaches and wonder alternately, in the quickest conceivable succession. "Delighted, it is settled and for ever! my dear, dear Helen! But how could you ever think of leaving us, you wicked Helen! Well! now you see what Clarendon really is! But, my dear, I was so terrified when I heard it all. You are, and ever were the oddest mixture of cowardice and courage. I—do you know I, brave *I*—never should have advised—never should have ventured as you have? But he is delighted at it all, and so am I now it has all ended so charmingly, now I have you safe. I will write to the Collingwoods; you shall not have a moment's pain, I will settle it all, and invite them here before they leave England; Clarendon desired I would —oh he is!—now you will believe me! The Collingwoods, too, will be glad to be asked here to take leave of you, and all will be right; I love, as you do, dear Helen, that everybody should be pleased when I am happy."

When Lady Davenant heard all that had passed, she did not express that prompt un-

mixed delight which Helen expected; a cloud came over her brow, something painful regarding her daughter seemed to strike her, for her eyes fixed on Cecilia, and her emotion was visible in her countenance; but pleasure unmixed appeared as she turned to Helen, and to her she gave, what was unusual, unqualified approbation.

"My dear Helen, I admire your plain straightforward truth; I am satisfied with this first essay of your strength of mind and courage."

"Courage!" said Helen, smiling.

"Not such as is required to take a lion by the beard, or a bull by the horns," replied Lady Davenant; "but there are many persons in this world who, brave though they be, would rather beard a lion, sooner seize a bull by the horns, than, when they get into a dilemma, dare to ask a direct question, and tell plainly what passes in their own minds. Moral courage is, believe me, uncommon in both sexes, and yet in going through the world it is equally necessary to the virtue of both men and women."

"But do you really think," said Helen, "that

strength of mind, or what you call moral courage, is as necessary to women as it is to men?"

"Certainly, shew me a virtue male or female—if virtues admit of grammatical distinctions, if virtues acknowledge the more worthy gender and the less worthy of the grammar, shew me a virtue male or female that *can* long exist without truth. Even that emphatically termed the virtue of our sex, Helen, on which social happiness rests, society depends, on what is it based? is it not on that single-hearted virtue truth?—and truth on what? on courage of the mind. They who dare to speak the truth, will not ever dare to go irretrievably wrong. Then what is falsehood but cowardice? —and a false woman!—does not that say all in one word?

"But whence arose all this? you wonder, perhaps," said Lady Davenant; "and I have not inclination to explain. Here comes Lord Davenant. Now for politics—farewell morality, a long farewell. Now for the London budget, and 'what news from Constantinople? Grand Vizier certainly strangled, or not?'"

## CHAPTER VI.

THE London budget of news was now opened, and gone through by Lord Davenant, including quarrels in the Cabinet and all that with fear of change perplexes politicians. But the fears and hopes of different ages are attached to such different subjects, that Helen heard all this as though she heard it not, and went on with her drawing, touching, and retouching it, without ever looking up, till her attention was wakened by the name of Granville Beauclerc; this was the name of the person who had written those interesting letters which she had met with in Lady Davenant's portfolio.

"What is he doing in town?" asked the General.

"Amusing himself, I suppose," replied Lord Davenant.

"I believe he forgets that I am his guardian," said the General.

"I am sure he cannot forget that you are his friend," said Lady Cecilia; "for he has the best heart in the world."

"And the worst head for anything useful," said the General.

"He is a man of genius," said Lady Davenant.

"Did you speak to him, my Lord," pursued the General, "about standing for the county?"

"Yes."

"And he said what?"

"That he would have nothing to do with it."

"Why?"

"Something about not being tied to party, and somewhat he said about patriotism," replied Lord Davenant.

"Nonsense!" said the General, "he is a fool."

"Only young," said Lady Davenant.

"Men are not so very young in these days at two and twenty," said the General.

"In some," said Lady Davenant, "the

classical touch, the romance of political virtue, lasts for months, if not years, after they leave college; even those who, like Granville, go into high life in London, do not sometimes for a season or two, lose their first enthusiasm of patriotism."

The General's lips became compressed. Lord Davenant, throwing himself back in his easy chair, repeated, "Patriotism! yes, every young man of talent is apt to begin with a fit of that sort."

"My dear Lord," cried Lady Davenant, "you, of all men, to speak of patriotism as a disease!"

"And a disease that can be had but once in life, I am afraid," replied her Lord laughing; "and yet," as if believing in that at which he laughed, "it evaporates in most men in words, written or spoken, lasts till the first pamphlet is published, or till the maiden-speech in parliament is fairly made, and fairly paid for — in all honour — all honourable men."

Lady Davenant passed over these satirical observations, and somewhat abruptly asked

Lord Davenant if he recollected the late Mr. Wyndham.

"Certainly, he was not a man to be easily forgotten; but what in particular?"

"The scales of his mind were too fine," said Lady Davenant, "too nicely adjusted for common purposes; diamond scales will not do for weighing wool. Very refined, very ingenious, very philosophical minds, such as Wyndham, Burke, Bacon, were all too scrupulous weighers: their scales turned with the millionth of a grain, and all from the same cause, subject to the same defect, indecision. They saw too well how much can be said on both sides of the question. There is a sort of philosophical doubt, arising from enlargement of understanding, quite different from that irresolution of character which is caused by infirmity of will; and I have observed," continued Lady Davenant, "in some of these over scrupulous weighers, that when once they come to a balance, that instant they become most wilful; so it will be, you will see, with Beauclerc. After excessive indecision, you will see him start perhaps at once to rash action."

"Rash of wrong, resolute of right," said Lord Davenant.

"He is constitutionally wilful, and metaphysically vacillating," said Lady Davenant.

The General waited till the metaphysics were over, and then said to Lord Davenant that he suspected there was something more than mere want of ambition in Beauclerc's refusal to go into Parliament. Some words were here inaudible to Helen, and the General began to walk up and down the room with so strong a tread, that at every step the china shook on the table near which Helen sat, so that she lost most part of what followed, and yet it seemed interesting, about some Lord Beltravers, and a Comtesse de Saint—something, or a Lady Blanche—somebody.

Lady Davenant looked anxious, the General's steps became more deliberately, more ominously firm; till Lady Cecilia came up to him, and playfully linking her arm in his, the steps were moderated, and when a soothing hand came upon his shoulder, the compressed lips were relaxed — she spoke in a low voice—he answered aloud.

"By all means! write to him yourself, my love; get him down here and he will be safe; he cannot refuse you."

"Tuesday, then?" she would name the earliest day if the General approved.

He approved of everything she said; "Tuesday let it be." Following him to the door, Lady Cecilia added something which seemed to fill the measure of his contentment.

"Always good and kind," said he; "so let it be."

"Then shall I write to your sister, or will you?"

"You," said the General, "let the kindness come from you, as it always does."

Lady Cecilia, in a moment at the writing-table, ran off, as fast as pen could go, two notes, which she put into her mother's hand, who gave an approving nod; and, leaving them with her to seal and have franked, Cecilia darted out on the terrace, carrying Helen along with her, to see some Italian garden she was projecting.

And as she went, and as she stood directing the workmen, at every close of her directions she spoke to Helen. She said she was very

glad that she had settled that Beauclerc was to come to them immediately. He was a great favourite of hers.

"Not for any of those grandissimo qualities which my mother sees in him, and which I am not quite clear exist; but just because he is the most agreeable person in nature; and really natural; though he is a man of the world, yet not the least affected. Quite fashionable, of course, but with true feeling. Oh! he is delightful, just"—then she interrupted herself to give directions to the workmen about her Italian garden——

"Oleander in the middle of that bed; vases nearer to the balustrade——"

"Beauclerc has a very good taste, and a beautiful place he has, Thorndale. He will be very rich. Few very rich young men are agreeable now, women spoil them so.—['border that bed with something pretty.']—Still he is, and I long to know what you will think of him; I know what I think he will think, but, however, I will say no more; people are always sure to get into scrapes in this world, when they say what they think.—['That foun-

tain looks beautiful.']—I forgot to tell you he is very handsome. The General is very fond of him, and he of the General, except when he considers him as his guardian, for Granville Beauclerc does not particularly like to be controlled—who does? especially by one only a few years older than himself. It is a curious story—['Unpack those vases, and by the time that is done I will be back.']—Take a turn with me, Helen, this way. It is a curious story: Granville Beauclerc's father—but I don't know it perfectly, I only know that he was a very odd man, and left the General, though he was so much younger than himself, guardian to Granville, and settled that he was not to be of age, I mean not to come into possession of his large estates, till he is five-and-twenty: shockingly hard on poor Granville, and enough to make him hate Clarendon, but he does not, and that is charming, that is one reason I like him! so amazingly respectful to his guardian always, considering how impetuous he is, amazingly respectful, though I cannot say I think he is what the gardening books call *patient of the knife*, I don't think he likes his fancies to be

lopped, but then he is so clever Much more what you would call a reading man than the General, distinguished at college, and all that which usually makes a young man conceited, but Beauclerc is only a little headstrong—all the more agreeable, it keeps one in agitation; one never knows how it will end, but I am sure it will all go on well now. It is curious, too, that mamma knew him also when he was at Eton, I believe—I don't know how, but long before we ever heard of Clarendon, and she corresponded with him, but I never knew him till he came to Florence, just after it was all settled with me and the General; and he was with us there and at Paris, and travelled home with us, and I like him. Now you know all, except what I do not choose to tell you, so come back to the workmen.—'That vase will not do there, move it in front of those evergreens; that will do.'"

Then returning to Helen—"After all, I did so right, and I am so glad I thought in time of inviting Esther, now Mr. Beauclerc is coming—the General's sister—half-sister. Oh, so unlike him! you would never guess Miss

Clarendon was his sister, except from her pride. But she is so different from other people; she knows nothing, and wishes to know nothing of the world. She lives always at an old castle in Wales, Llan—something, which she inherited from her mother, and she has always been her own mistress, living with her aunt in melancholy grandeur there, till her brother brought her to Florence, where—oh, how she was out of her element! Come this way and I will tell you more. The fact is, I do not much like Miss Clarendon, and I will tell you why—I will describe her to you."

"No, no, do not," said Helen; "do not, my dear Cecilia, and I will tell you why."

"Why—why?" cried Cecilia.

"Do you recollect the story my uncle told us about the young bride and her old friend, and the bit of advice?"

No, Cecilia did not recollect any thing of it. She should be very glad to hear the anecdote, but as to the advice, she hated advice.

"Still, if you knew who gave it—it was given by a very great man."

" A very great man ! now you make me curious. Well, what is it ?" said Lady Cecilia.

" That for one year after her marriage, she would not tell to her friends the opinion she had formed, if unfavourable, of any of her husband's relations, as it was probable she might change that opinion on knowing them better, and would afterwards be sorry for having told her first hasty judgment. Long afterwards the lady told her friend that she owed to this advice a great part of the happiness of her life, for she really had, in the course of the year, completely changed her first notions of some of her husband's family, and would have had sorely to repent, if she had told her first thoughts !"

Cecilia listened, and said it was all " Vastly well ! excellent ! But I had nothing in the world to say of Miss Clarendon, but that she was too good — too sincere for the world we live in. For instance, at Paris, one day a charming Frenchwoman was telling some anecdote of the day in the most amusing manner. Esther Clarendon all the while stood by, grave and black as night, and at last turning upon

our charmer at the end of the story, pronounced, 'There is not one word of truth in all you have been saying!' Conceive it, in full salon! The French were in such amazement. 'Inconceivable!' as they might well say to me, as she walked off with her tragedy-queen air; '*Inconcevable — mais, vraiment inconcevable;*' and '*Bien Anglaise*,' they would have added, no doubt, if I had not been by."

"But there must surely have been some particular reason," said Helen.

"None in the world, only th story was not true, I believe. And then another time, when she was with her cousin, the Duchess of Lisle, at Lisle-Royal, and was to have gone out the next season in London with the Duchess, she came down one morning, just before they were to set off for town, and declared that she had heard such a quantity of scandal since she had been there, and such shocking things of London society, that she had resolved not to go out with the Duchess, and not to go to town at all! So absurd - so prudish!"

Helen felt some sympathy in this, and was going to have said so, but Cecilia went on with—

"And then to expect that Granville Beauclerc—should——"

Here Cecilia paused, and Helen felt curious, and ashamed of her curiosity; she turned away, to raise the branches of some shrub, which were drooping from the weight of their flowers.

"I know something *has* been thought of," said Cecilia. "A match has been in contemplation—do you comprehend me, Helen?"

"You mean that Mr. Beauclerc is to marry Miss Clarendon," said Helen, compelled to speak.

"I only say it has been thought of," replied Lady Cecilia; "that is, as everything in this way is thought of about every couple not within the prohibited degrees, one's grandmother inclusive. And the plainer the woman, the more sure she is to contemplate such things for herself, lest no one else should think of them for her. But, my dear Helen, if you mean to ask——"

"Oh, I don't mean to ask any thing," cried Helen.

"But, whether you ask or not, I must tell

you that the General is too proud to own, even to himself, that he could ever think of any man for his sister who had not first proposed for her."

There was a pause for some minutes.

"But," resumed Lady Cecilia, "I could not do less than ask her here for Clarendon's sake, when I know it pleases him; and she is very—estimable, and so I wish to make her love me if I could! But I do not think she will be nearer her point with Mr. Beauclerc, if it is her point, by coming here just now. Granville has eyes as well as ears, and contrasts will strike. I know who I wish should strike him, as she strikes me—and I think—I hope——"

Helen looked distressed.

"I am as innocent as a dove," pursued Lady Cecilia; "but I suppose even doves may have their own private little thoughts and wishes."

Helen was sure Cecilia had meant all this most kindly, but she was sorry that some things had been said. She was conscious of having been interested by those letters of Mr. Beauclerc's, but a particular thought had now been put into her mind, and she could never

more say, never more feel, that such a thought had not come into her head. She was very sorry; it seemed as if somewhat of the freshness, the innocence, of her mind was gone from her. She was sorry, too, that she had heard all that Cecilia had said about Miss Clarendon; it appeared as if she was actually doomed to get into some difficulty with the General about his sister; she felt as if thrown back into a sea of doubts, and she was not clear that she could, even by opposing, end them.

On the appointed Tuesday, late, Miss Clarendon arrived; a fine figure, but ungraceful, as Helen observed, from the first moment when she turned sharply away from Lady Cecilia's embrace to a great dog of her brother's — "Ah, old Neptune! I 'm glad you 're here still."

And when Lady Cecilia would have put down his paws — "Let him alone, let him alone, dear honest old fellow."

"But the dear, honest, old fellow's paws are wet, and will ruin your pretty new pelisse," said Lady Cecilia.

"It may be new, but you know it is not pretty," said Miss Clarendon, continuing to pat Neptune's head as he jumped up with his paws on her shoulders.

"O my dear Esther, how can you bear him? he is so rough in his love!"

"I like rough better than smooth." The rough paw caught in her lace frill, and it was torn to pieces before "down! down!" and the united efforts of Lady Cecilia and Helen could extricate it.—"Don't distress yourselves about it, pray; it does not signify in the least. Poor Neptune, how really sorry *he* looks — there, there, wag your tail again, no one shall come between us two old friends"

Her brother came in, and, starting up, her arms were thrown round his neck, and her bonnet falling back, Helen, who had thought her quite plain before, was surprised to see that, now her colour was raised, and there was life in her eyes, she was really handsome.

Gone again that expression, when Cecilia spoke to her; whatever she said, Miss Clarendon differed from; if it was a matter of taste, she was always of the contrary opinion; if narra-

tive or assertion, she questioned, doubted, seemed as if she could not believe. Her conversation, if conversation it could be called, was a perpetual rebating and regrating, especially with her sister-in-law; if Lady Cecilia did but say there were three instead of four, it was taken up as "quite a mistake," and marked not only as a mistake, but as "not true." Every, the slightest error, became a crime against majesty, and the first day ended with Helen's thinking her really the most disagreeable, intolerable person she had ever seen.

And the second day went on a little worse. Helen thought Cecilia took too much pains to please, and said it would be better to let her quite alone. Helen did so completely, but Miss Clarendon did not let Helen alone; but watched her with penetrating eyes continually, listened to every word she said, and seeming to weigh every syllable,.—"Oh, my words are not worth your weighing," said Helen, laughing.

"Yes they are, to settle my mind."

The first thing that seemed at all to settle it was Helen's not agreeing with Cecilia about

the colour of two ribbons which Helen said she could not flatter her were good matches. The next was about a drawing of Miss Clarendon's, of Llansillan, her aunt Pennant's place; a beautiful drawing indeed, which she had brought for her brother, but one of the towers of the old abbey certainly was out of the perpendicular. Helen was appealed to, and could not say it was upright; Miss Clarendon instantly took up a knife, cut the paper at the back of the frame, and, taking out the drawing, set the tower to rights.

"There's the use of telling the truth."

"Of listening to it," said Helen.

"We shall get on, I see, Miss Stanley, if you can get over the first bitter outside of me;—a hard outside, difficult to crack—stains delicate fingers, may be," she continued, as she replaced her drawing in its frame—"stains delicate fingers, may be, in the opening too, but a good walnut you will find it, taken with a grain of salt."

Many a grain seemed necessary, and very strong nut-crackers in very strong hands. Lady Cecilia's evidently were not strong

enough, though she strained hard. Helen did not feel inclined to try.

Cecilia invited Miss Clarendon to walk out and see some of the alterations her brother had made. As they passed the new Italian garden, Miss Clarendon asked, "What's all this? — I don't like this — how I regret the Old English garden, and the high beech hedges. Every thing is to be changed here, I suppose, — pray do not ask my opinion about any of the alterations."

"I do not wonder," said Cecilia, "that you should prefer the old garden, with all your early associations; warm-hearted, amiable people must always be so fond of what they have loved in childhood."

"I never was here when I was a child, and I am not one of your amiable people."

"Very true indeed," thought Helen.

"Miss Stanley looks at me as if I had seven heads," said Miss Clarendon, laughing; and, a minute after, overtaking Helen as she walked on, she looked full in her face, and added, "Do acknowledge that you think me a savage." Helen did not deny it, and from that moment

Miss Clarendon looked less savagely upon her: she laughed and said, "I am not quite such a bear as I seem, you'll find; at least I never hug people to death. My growl is worse than my bite, unless some one should flatter my classical, bearish passion, and offer to feed me with honey, and when I find it all comb and no honey; who would not growl then?"

Lady Cecilia now came up, and pointed out views to which the General had opened. "Yes, it's well, he has done very well, but pray don't stand on ceremony with me. I can walk alone, you may leave me to my own cogitations, as I like best."

"Surely, as you like best," said Lady Cecilia; "pray consider yourself, as you know you are, at home here."

"No, I never shall be at home here," said Esther.

"Oh! don't say that, let me hope—let me hope—" and she withdrew. Helen just stayed to unlock a gate for Miss Clarendon's "rambles further," and, as she unlocked it, she heard Miss Clarendon sigh as she repeated the word, "Hope! I do not like to hope, hope has so often deceived me."

"You will never be deceived in Cecilia," said Helen.

"Take care—stay till you try."

"I have tried," said Helen, "I know her."

"How long?"

"From childhood!"

"You're scarcely out of childhood yet."

"I am not so very young. I have had trials of my friends — of Cecilia particularly, much more than you could ever have had."

"Well, this is the best thing I ever heard of her, and from good authority too; her friends abroad were all false," said Miss Clarendon. "It is so very extraordinary to hear such a young person as you are talk so—"

"So—how?

"Of false friends—you must have been very unfortunate."

"Pardon me—very fortunate—to find them out in time." She looked at the prospect, and liked all that her brother was doing, and disliked all that she even guessed Lady Cecilia had done. Helen shewed her that she guessed wrong here and there, and smiled at her pre-

judices; and Miss Clarendon smiled again, and admitted that she was prejudiced, "but everybody is; only some shew and tell, and others smile and fib. I wish that word fib was out of the English language, and white lie drummed out after it. Things by their right names and we should all do much better. Truth must be told, whether agreeable or not."

"But whoever makes truth disagreeable commits high treason against virtue," said Helen.

"Is that yours?" cried Miss Clarendon, stopping short.

"No," said Helen.

"It is excellent whoever said it."

"It was from my uncle Stanley I heard it," said Helen.

"Superior man that uncle must have been."

"I will leave you now," said Helen.

"Do, I see we shall like one another in time, Miss Stanley; in time,—I hate sudden friendships."

That evening Miss Clarendon questioned Helen more about her friendship with Cecilia, and how it was she came to live with her. Helen plainly told her.

"Then it was not an original promise between you?"

"Not at all," said Helen.

"Lady Cecilia told me it was. Just like her,—I knew all the time it was a lie."

Shocked and startled at the word, and at the idea, Helen exclaimed, "Oh! Miss Clarendon, how can you say so? anybody may be mistaken. Cecilia mistook——"

Lady Cecilia joined them at this moment. Miss Clarendon's face was flushed. "This room is insufferably hot. What can be the use of a fire at this time of year?"

Cecilia said it was for her mother, who was apt to be chilly in the evenings; and as she spoke, she put a skreen between the flushed cheek and the fire. Miss Clarendon pushed it away, saying, "I can't talk, I can't hear, I can't understand with a skreen before me. What did you say, Lady Cecilia, to Lady Davenant, as we came out from dinner, about Mr. Beauclerc?"

"That we expect him to-morrow."

"You did not tell me so when you wrote!"

"No, my dear."

"Why, pray?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know, Lady Cecilia! why should people say they do not know, when they do know perfectly well?"

"If I had thought it was of any consequence to you, Esther," said Cecilia, with an arch look——

"Now you expect me to answer that it was not of the least consequence to me—that is the answer you would make, but my answer is, that it was of consequence to me, and you knew it was."

"And if I did?"

"If you did, why say 'If I had thought it of any consequence to you?' — why say so? answer me truly."

"Answer me truly!" repeated Lady Cecilia, laughing. "Oh, my dear Esther, we are not in a court of justice."

"Nor in a court of honour," pursued Miss Clarendon.

"Well, well! let it be a court of love at least," said Lady Cecilia. "What a pretty proverb that was, Helen, that we met with the other day in that book of old English proverbs— 'Love rules his kingdom without a sword.'"

"Very likely; but to the point," said Miss Clarendon, "when do you expect Mr. Beauclerc?"

"To-morrow."

"Then I shall go to-morrow!"

"My dear Esther, why?"

"You know why; you know what reports have been spread; it suits neither my character nor my brother's to give any foundation for such reports. Let me ring the bell, and I will give my own orders."

"My dear Esther, but your brother will be so vexed—so surprised."

"My brother is the best judge of his own conduct, he will do what he pleases, or what you please. I am the judge of mine, and certainly shall do what I think right."

She rang accordingly, and ordered that her carriage should be at the door at six o'clock in the morning.

"Nay, my dear Esther," persisted Cecilia, "I wish you would not decide so suddenly; we were so glad to have you come to us——"

"Glad! why you know——"

"I know," interrupted Lady Cecilia, colour-

ing, and she began as fast as possible to urge every argument she could think of to persuade Miss Clarendon; but no arguments, no entreaties of her's or the General's, public or private, were of any avail, go she would, and go she did at six o' clock.

"I suppose," said Helen to Lady Davenant, "that Miss Clarendon is very estimable, and she seems to be very clever: but I wonder that with all her abilities she does not learn to make her manners more agreeable."

"My dear," said Lady Davenant, "we must take people as they are; you may graft a rose upon an oak, but those who have tried the experiment tell us the graft will last but a short time, and the operation ends in the destruction of both; where the stocks have no common nature, there is ever a want of conformity which sooner or later proves fatal to both."

But Beauclerc, what was become of him?—that day passed, and no Beauclerc; another and another came, and on the third day, only a letter from him, which ought to have come on Tuesday.—But "*too late*," the shameful brand

of procrastination was upon it—and it contained only a few lines blotted in the folding, to say that he could not possibly be at Clarendon Park on Tuesday, but would on Wednesday or Thursday if possible.

Good-natured Lord Davenant observed, "When a young man in London, writing to his friends in the country, names two days for leaving town, and adds an '*if possible*,' his friends should never expect him till the last of the two named."

The last of the two days arrived—Thursday. The aide-de-camp asked if Mr. Beauclerc was expected to-day.

"Yes, I expect to see him to-day," the General answered.

"I hope, but do not expect," said Lady Davenant; "for, as learned authority tells me, 'to expect is to hope with some degree of certainty'——"

The General left the room repeating, "I expect him to-day, Cecilia."

The day passed, however, and he came not—the night came. The General ordered that the gates should be kept open, and that a servant

should sit up. The servant sat up all night, cursing Mr. Beauclerc. And in the morning he replied with malicious alacrity to the first question his master asked, "No, Sir, Mr. Beauclerc is not come."

At breakfast, the General, after buttering his toast in silence for some minutes, confessed that he loved punctuality. It might be a military prejudice; — it might be too professional, martinet perhaps, — but still he owned he did love punctuality. He considered it as a part of politeness, a proper attention to the convenience and feelings of others; indispensable between strangers it is usually felt to be, and he did not know why intimate friends should deem themselves privileged to dispense with it.

His eyes met Helen's as he finished these words, and smiling, he complimented her upon her constant punctuality. It was a voluntary grace in a lady, but an imperative duty in a man—and a young man.

"You are fond of this young man, I see General," said Lord Davenant.

"But not of his faults."

Lady Cecilia said something about forgiving a first fault.

"Never!" said Lady Davenant. "Lord Collingwood's rule was—never forgive a first fault, and you will not have a second. You love Beauclerc, I see, as Lord Davenant says."

"Love him!" resumed the General; "with all his faults and follies, I love him as if he were my brother."

At which words Lady Cecilia, with a scarcely perceptible smile, cast a furtive glance at Helen.

The General called for his horses, and, followed by his aide-de-camp, departed, saying that he should be in at luncheon-time, when he hoped to find Beauclerc. In the same hope, Lady Davenant ordered her pony-phaeton earlier than usual; Lady Cecilia further hoped most earnestly that Beauclerc would come this day, for the next the house would be full of company, and she really wished to have him one day at least to themselves, and she gave a most significant glance at Helen.

"The first move often secures the game against the best players," said she.

Helen blushed, because she could not help understanding; she was ashamed, vexed with Cecilia, yet pleased by her kindness, and half amused by her arch look and tone.

They were neither of them aware that Lady Davenant had heard the words that passed, or seen the looks; but immediately afterwards, when they were leaving the breakfast-room, Lady Davenant came between the two friends, laid her hand upon her daughter's arm, and said,

"Before you make any move in a dangerous game, listen to the voice of old experience."

Lady Cecilia startled, looked up, but as if she did not comprehend.

"Cupid's bow, my dear," continued her mother, "is, as the Asiatics tell us, strung with bees, which are apt to sting—sometimes fatally—those who meddle with it."

Lady Cecilia still looked with an innocent air, and still as if she could not comprehend.

"To speak more plainly, then, Cecilia," said her mother, "build no matrimonial castles

in the air; standing or falling they do mischief —mischief either to the builder, or to those for whom they may be built?"

"Certainly if they fall they disappoint one," said Lady Cecilia, "but if they stand."

Seeing that she made no impression on her daughter, Lady Davenant turned to Helen, and gravely said,

"My dear Helen, do not let my daughter inspire you with false, and perhaps vain imaginations, certainly premature, therefore unbecoming."

Helen shrunk back, yet instantly looked up, and her look was ingenuously grateful.

"But, mamma," said Lady Cecilia, "I declare I do not understand what all this is about."

"About Mr. Granville Beauclerc," said her mother.

"How can you, dear mamma, pronounce his name so *tout au long*?"

"Pardon my indelicacy, my dear; delicacy is a good thing, but truth a better. I have seen the happiness of many young women sacrificed by such false delicacy, and by the fear of giving

a moment's present pain, which it is sometimes the duty of a true friend to give."

"Certainly, certainly, mamma, only not necessary now; and I am so sorry you have said all this to poor dear Helen."

"If you have said nothing to her, Cecilia, I acknowledge I have said too much."

"I said—I did nothing," cried Lady Cecilia; "I built no castles—never built a regular castle in my life; never had a regular plan in my existence; never mentioned his name, except about another person——"

An appealing look to Helen was however *protested.*

"To the best of my recollection, at least," Lady Cecilia immediately added.

"Helen seems to be blushing for your want of recollection, Cecilia."

"I am sure I do not know why you blush, Helen. I am certain I never did say a word distinctly"

"Not *distinctly* certainly," said Helen in a low voice. "It was my fault if I understood——"

"Always true, you are," said Lady Davenant.

"I protest I said nothing but the truth," cried Lady Cecilia hastily.

"But not the whole truth, Cecilia," said her mother.

"I did, upon my word, mamma," persisted Lady Cecilia, repeating "upon my word."

"Upon your word, Cecilia! that is either a vulgar expletive or a most serious asseveration."

She spoke with a grave tone, and with her severe look, and Helen dared not raise her eyes; Lady Cecilia now coloured deeply.

"Shame! Nature's hasty conscience," said Lady Davenant. "Heaven preserve it!"

"Oh, mother!" cried Lady Cecilia, laying her hand on her mother's, "surely you do not think seriously — surely you are not angry—I cannot bear to see you displeased," said she, looking up imploringly in her mother's face, and softly, urgently pressing her hand. No pressure was returned, that hand was slowly and with austere composure withdrawn, and her mother walked away down the corridor to her own room.

Lady Cecilia stood still, and the tears came into her eyes.

"My dear friend, I am exceedingly sorry," said Helen. She could not believe that Cecilia meant to say what was not true, yet she felt that she had been to blame in not telling all, and her mother in saying too much.

Lady Cecilia, her tears dispersed, stood looking at the impression which her mother's signet-ring had left in the palm of her hand. It was at that moment a disagreeable recollection that the motto of that ring was "Truth." Rubbing the impress from her hand, she said, half speaking to herself, and half to Helen — "I am sure I did not mean anything wrong; and I am sure nothing can be more true than that I never formed a regular plan in my life. After all, I am sure that so much has been said about nothing, that I do not understand anything: I never do, when mamma goes on in that way, making mountains of molehills, which she always does with me, and did ever since I was a child; but she really forgets that I am not a child. Now, it is well the General was not by; he would never have borne to see his wife so treated. But I would not, for the world, be the cause of any disagreement. Oh!

Helen, my mother does not know how I love her, let her be ever so severe to me! But she never loved me; she cannot help it. I believe she does her best to love me — my poor, dear mother!"

Helen seized this opportunity to repeat the warm expressions she had heard so lately from Lady Davenant, and melting they sunk into Cecilia's heart. She kissed Helen again and again, for a dear, good peacemaker, as she always was — and "I 'm resolved" — but in the midst of her good resolves she caught a glimpse through the glass door opening on the park, of the General, and a fine horse they were ringing, and she hurried out; all light of heart she went, as though

> "Her treading would not bend a blade of grass,
> Or shake the downy *blowball* from her stalk."

## CHAPTER VII.

SINCE Lord Davenant's arrival, Lady Davenant's time was so much taken up with him, that Helen could not have many opportunities of conversing with her, and she was the more anxious to seize every one that occurred. She always watched for the time when Lady Davenant went out in her pony phaeton, for then she had her delightfully to herself, the carriage holding only two.

It was at the door, and Lady Davenant was crossing the hall followed by Helen, when Cecilia came in with a look, unusual in her, of being much discomfited.

"Another put-off from Mr. Beauclerc! He will not be here to-day. I give him up."

Lady Davenant stopped short, and asked whether Cecilia had told him that probably she should soon be gone?"

"To be sure I did, mamma."

"And what reason does he give for his delay?"

"None, mamma, none—not the least apology. He says, very cavalierly indeed, that he is the worst man in the world at making excuses—shall attempt none."

"There he is right," said Lady Davenant. "Those who are good at excuses, as Franklin justly observed, are apt to be good for nothing else."

The General came up the steps at this moment, rolling a note between his fingers, and looking displeased. Lady Davenant inquired if he could tell her the cause of Mr. Beauclerc's delay. He could not.

Lady Cecilia exclaimed—"Very extraordinary! Provoking! Insufferable! Intolerable!"

"It is Mr. Beauclerc's own affair," said Lady Davenant, wrapping her shawl round her; and, giving her hand to the General, she walked on to her carriage. Seating herself, and gathering up the reins, she repeated—"Mr. Beauclerc's own affair, completely."

The lash of her whip was caught somewhere, and, while the groom was disentangling it, she reiterated — "That will do: let the horses go:" — and with half-suppressed impatience thanked Helen, who was endeavouring to arrange some ill-disposed cloak — "Thank you, thank you, my dear: it's all very well. Sit down, Helen."

She drove off rapidly, through the beautiful park scenery. But the ancient oaks, standing alone, casting vast shadows; the woods, of magnificent extent, and of soft and varied foliage; the glades in the distant views, to which there were most beautiful openings — all were lost upon her. Looking straight between her horses' ears, she drove on in absolute silence.

Helen's idea of Mr. Beauclerc's importance increased wonderfully. What must he be, whose coming or not coming could so move all the world, or those who were, all the world to her? And, left to her own cogitations, she was picturing to herself what manner of man he might be, when suddenly Lady Davenant turned, and asked what she was

thinking of? "I beg your pardon for startling you so, my dear; I am aware that it is a dreadfully imprudent, impertinent question — one which, indeed, I seldom ask. Few interest me sufficiently to make me care of what they think: from fewer still could I expect to hear the truth. Nay — nothing upon compulsion, Helen. Only say plainly, if you would rather not tell me. That answer I should prefer to the ingenious formula of evasion, the solecism in metaphysics, which Cecilia used the other day, when unwittingly I asked her of what she was thinking — 'Of a great many different things, mamma.'"

Helen, still more alarmed by Lady Davenant's speech than by her question, and aware of the conclusions which might be drawn from her answer, nevertheless bravely replied that she had been thinking of Mr. Beauclerc, of what he might be whose coming or not coming was of such consequence. As she spoke, the expression of Lady Davenant's countenance changed.

"Thank you, my dear child, you are truth itself, and truly do I love you therefore. It's

well that you did not ask me of what I was thinking, for I am not sure that I could have answered so directly."

"But I could never have presumed to ask such a question of you," said Helen, "there is such a difference."

"Yes," replied Lady Davenant; "there is such a difference as age and authority require to be made, but nevertheless, such as is not quite consistent with the equal rights of friendship. You have told me the subject of your day-dream, my love, and, if you please, I will tell you the subject of mine. I was rapt into times long past: I was living over again some early scenes — some which are connected, and which connect me, in a curious manner, with this very young man, Mr. Granville Beauclerc."

She seemed to speak with some difficulty, and yet to be resolved to go on.

"Helen, I have a mind," continued she, "to tell you what, in the language of affected autobiographers, I might call 'some passages of my life.'"

Helen's eyes brightened, as she eagerly thanked her: but hearing a half-suppressed

sigh, she added — " Not if it is painful to you though, my dear Lady Davenant."

" Painful it must be," she replied, " but it may be useful to you; and a weak friend is that who can do only what is pleasurable. You have often trusted me with those little inmost feelings of the heart, which, however innocent, we shrink from exposing to any but the friends we most love; it is unjust and absurd of those advancing in years, to expect of the young that confidence should come all and only on their side: the human heart, at whatever age, opens only to the heart that opens in return."

Lady Davenant paused again, and then said, —" It is a general opinion, that nobody is the better for advice."

" I am sure I do not think so," said Helen.

" I am glad you do not; nor do I. Much depends upon the way in which it is offered. General maxims, drawn from experience, are, to the young at least, but as remarks — moral sentences — mere dead letter, and take no hold of the mind. ' I have felt ' must come before ' I think,' especially in speaking to a young

friend, and, though I am accused of being so fond of generalizing that I never come to particulars, I can and will: therefore, my dear, I will tell you some particulars of my life, in which, take notice, there are no adventures. Mine has been a life of passion — of feeling, at least — not of incidents: nothing, my dear, to excite or to gratify curiosity."

"But, independent of all curiosity about events," said Helen, "there is such an interest in knowing what has been really felt and thought in their former lives by those we know and love."

"I shall sink in your esteem," said Lady Davenant — "so be it.

"I need not begin, as most people do, with 'I was born'—" but, interrupting herself, she said "this heat is too much for me."

They turned into a long shady drive through the woods. Lady Davenant drew up the reins, and her ponies walked slowly on the grassy road; then, turning to Helen, she said:—

"It would have been well for me if any friend had, when I was of your age, put me on my guard against my own heart: but my too-

indulgent, too sanguine mother, led me into the very danger against which she should have warned me — misled me, though without being aware of it. Our minds, our very natures, differed strangely.

"She was a castle-builder — yes, now you know, my dear, why I spoke so strongly, and, as you thought, so severely, the other morning. My mother was a castle-builder of the ordinary sort: a worldly plan of a castle was her's, and little care had she about the knight within; yet she had sufficient tact to know that it must be the idea of the *preux chevalier* that would lure her daughter into the castle. Prudent for herself, imprudent for me, and yet she loved me—all she did was for love of me. She managed with so much address, that I had no suspicion of my being the subject of any speculation—otherwise, probably, my imagination might have revolted, my selfwill have struggled, my pride have interfered, or my delicacy might have been alarmed, but nothing of all that happened; I was only too ready, too glad to believe all that I was told, all that appeared in that spring-time of hope and love. I was very romantic, not in

the modern fashionable young-lady sense of the word, with the mixed ideas of a shepherdess's hat and the paraphernalia of a peeress—love in a cottage, and a fashionable house in town. No; mine was honest, pure, real romantic love—absurd if you will; it was love nursed by imagination more than by hope. I had early, in my secret soul, as perhaps you have at this instant in yours, a pattern of perfection — something chivalrous, noble, something that is no longer to be seen now-a-days—the more delightful to imagine, the moral sublime and beautiful; more than human, yet with the extreme of human tenderness. Mine was to be a demigod whom I could worship, a husband to whom I could always look up, with whom I could always sympathize, and to whom I could devote myself with all a woman's self-devotion. I had then a vast idea—as I think you have now, Helen—of self-devotion; you would devote yourself to your friends, but I could not shape any of my friends into a fit object. So after my own imagination I made one, dwelt upon it, doated on it, and at last threw this bright image of my own fancy full upon the being to

whom I thought I was most happily destined —destined by duty, chosen by affection. The words "I love you" once pronounced, I gave my whole heart in return, gave it, sanctified, as I felt, by religion. I had high religious sentiments; a vow once passed the lips, a look, a single look, of appeal to Heaven, was as much for me as if pronounced at the altar, and before thousands to witness. Some time was to elapse before the celebration of our marriage. Protracted engagements are unwise, yet I should not say so; this gave me time to open my eyes—my bewitched eyes: still, some months I passed in a trance of beatification, with visions of duties all performed—benevolence universal, and gratitude, and high success, and crowns of laurel, for my hero, for he was military; it all joined well in my fancy. All the pictured tales of vast heroic deeds were to be his. Living, I was to live in the radiance of his honour; or dying, to die with him, and then to be most blessed.

It is all to me now as a dream, long passed, and never told; no, never, except to him who had a right to know it—my husband, and now

to you, Helen. From my dream I was awakened by a rude shock—I saw, I thank Heaven I first, and I alone, saw that his heart was gone from me—that his heart had never been mine—that it was unworthy of me. No, I will not say that; I will not think so. Still I trust that he deceived himself, though not so much as he deceived me. I am willing to believe he did not know that what he professed for me was not love, till he was seized by that passion for another, a younger, fairer——Oh! how much fairer. Beauty is a great gift of heaven—not for the purposes of female vanity; but a great gift for one who loves and wishes to be loved. But beauty I had not."

"Had not!" interrupted Helen, "I always heard——"

"*He* did not think so, my dear; no matter what others thought, at least so I felt at that time. My identity is so much changed that I can look back upon this now, and tell it all to you calmly.

"It was at a rehearsal of the ancient music; I went there accidentally one morning without my mother, with a certain old duchess and her

daughters; the dowager, full of some Indian skreen which she was going to buy; the daughters, intent, one of them, on a quarrel between two of the singers; the other upon loves and hates of her own. I was the only one of the party who had any real taste for music. I was then particularly fond of it.

"Well, my dear, I must come to the point," her voice changing as she spoke.—"After such a lapse of time, during which my mind, my whole self has so changed, I could not have believed before I began to speak on this subject, that these reminiscences could have so moved me; but it is merely this sudden wakening of ideas long dormant, for years not called up, never put into words.

"I was sitting, wrapt in a silent ecstasy of pleasure, leaning back behind the whispering party, when I saw him come in, and, thinking only of his sharing my delight, I made an effort to catch his attention, but he did not see me—his eye was fixed on another; I followed that eye, and saw that most beautiful creature on which it fixed; I saw him seat himself beside her—one look was enough—it was conviction. A pang

went through me; I grew cold, but made no sound nor motion; I gasped for breath, I believe, but I did not faint. None cared for me; I was unnoticed—saved from the abasement of pity I struggled to retain my self-command, and was enabled to complete the purpose on which I then — even *then*, resolved. That resolve gave me force.

"In any great emotion we can speak better to those who do not care for us than to those who feel for us. More calmly than I now speak to you, I turned to the person who then sat beside me, to the dowager whose heart was in the Indian skreen, and begged that I might not longer detain her, as I wished that she would carry me home—she readily complied: I had presence of mind enough to move when we could do so without attracting attention. It was well that woman talked as she did all the way home; she never saw, never suspected, the agony of her to whom she spoke. I ran up to my own room, bolted the door, and threw myself into a chair; that is the last thing I remember, till I found myself lying on the floor, wakening from a state of

insensibility. I know not what time had elapsed; as soon as I could, I rang for my maid; she had knocked at my door, and, supposing I slept, had not disturbed me—my mother, I found, had not yet returned.

"I dressed for dinner: HE was to dine with us. It was my custom to see him for a few minutes before the rest of the company arrived. No time ever appeared to me so dreadfully long as the interval between my being dressed that day and his arrival.

"I heard him coming up-stairs: my heart beat so violently that I feared I should not be able to speak with dignity and composure, but the motive was sufficient.

"What I said, I know not; I am certain only that it was without one word of reproach. What I had at one glance foreboded was true —he acknowledged it. I released him from all engagement to me. I saw he was evidently relieved by the determined tone of my refusal—at what expense to my heart he was set free, he saw not — never knew — never suspected. But after that first involuntary expression of the pleasure of relief, I saw in his countenance

surprise, a sort of mortified astonishment at my self-possession. I own my woman's pride enjoyed this; it was something better than pride — the sense of the preservation of my dignity. I felt that in this shipwreck of my happiness I made no cowardly exposure of my feelings, but he did not understand me. Our minds, as I now found, moved in different orbits. We could not comprehend each other. Instead of feeling, as the instinct of generosity would have taught him to feel, that I was sacrificing my happiness to his, he told me that he now believed I had never loved him. My eyes were opened — I saw him at once as he really was. The ungenerous look upon self-devotion as madness, folly, or art: he could not think me a fool, he did not think me mad, artful I believe he did suspect me to be; he concluded that I made the discovery of his inconstancy an excuse for my own; he thought me, perhaps, worse than capricious, interested — for, our engagement being unknown, a lover of higher rank had, in the interval, presented himself. My perception of this base suspicion was useful to me at the moment, as it roused my spirit, and I went through

the better, and without relapse of tenderness, with that which I had undertaken. One condition only I made, I insisted that this explanation should rest between us two; that, in fact, and in manner, the breaking off the match should be left entirely to me. And to this part of the business I now look back with satisfaction, and I have honest pride in telling you, who will feel the same for me, that I practised in the whole conduct of the affair no deceit of any kind, not one falsehood was told. The world knew nothing; there my mother had been prudent. She was the only person to whom I was bound to explain—to speak, I mean, for I did not feel myself bound to explain. Perfect confidence only can command perfect confidence in whatever relation of life. I told her all that she had a right to know. I announced to her that the intended marriage could never be — that I objected to it; that both our minds were changed; that we were both satisfied in having released each other from our mutual engagement. I had, as I foresaw, to endure my mother's anger, her entreaties, her endless surprise, her bitter disappoint-

ment; but she exhausted all these, and her mind turned sooner than I had expected to that hope of higher establishment which amused her during the rest of the season in London. Two months of it were still to be passed —to me the two most painful months of my existence. The daily, nightly, effort of appearing in public, while I was thus wretched, in the full gala of life, in the midst of the young, the gay, the happy—broken-hearted as I felt—it was an effort beyond my strength. That summer was, I remember, intolerably hot. Whenever my mother observed that I looked pale, and that my spirits were not so good as formerly, I exerted myself more and more; accepted every invitation because I dared not refuse; danced at this ball, and the next, and the next; urged on, I finished to the dregs the dissipation of the season.

"My mother certainly made me do dreadfully too much. But I blame others, as we usually do when we are ourselves the most to blame—I had attempted that which could not be done. By suppressing all outward sign of

suffering, allowing no vent for sorrow in words or tears — by actual force of compression — I thought at once to extinguish my feelings. Little did I know of the human heart when I thought this! The weak are wise in yielding to the first shock. They cannot be struck to the earth who sink prostrate; sorrow has little power where there is no resistance.—'The flesh will follow where the pincers tear.' Mine was a presumptuous — it had nearly been a fatal struggle. That London season at last over, we got into the country; I expected rest, but found none. The pressing necessity for exertion over, the stimulus ceasing, I sunk—sunk into a state of apathy.

"Time enough had elapsed between the breaking off of my marriage and the appearance of this illness, to prevent any ideas on my mother's part of cause and effect, ideas indeed which were never much looked for, or well joined in her mind. The world knew nothing of the matter. My illness went under the convenient head 'nervous.' I heard all the opinions pronounced on my case, and knew they

were all mistaken, but I swallowed whatever they pleased. No physician, I repeated to myself, can 'minister to a mind diseased.'

"I tried to call religion to my aid; but my religious sentiments were, at that time, tinctured with the enthusiasm of my early character. Had I been a Catholic, I should have escaped from my friends and thrown myself into a cloister; as it was, I had formed a strong wish to retire from that world which was no longer anything to me: the spring of passion, which I then thought the spring of life, being broken, I meditated my resolution secretly and perpetually as I lay on my bed. They used to read to me, and, among other things, some papers of "The Rambler," which I liked not at all; its tripod sentences tired my ear, but I let them go on—as well one sound as another.

"It chanced that one night, as I was going to sleep, an eastern story in "The Rambler," was read to me, about some man, a-weary of the world, who took to the peaceful hermitage. There was a regular moral tagged to the end of it, a thing I hate, the words were, 'No life pleasing to God that is not useful to man.'

When I wakened in the middle of that night, this sentence was before my eyes, and the words seemed to repeat themselves over and over again to my ears when I was sinking to sleep. The impression remained in my mind, and though I never voluntarily recurred to it, came out long afterwards, perfectly fresh, and became a motive of action.

"Strange, mysterious connexion between mind and body; in mere animal nature we see the same. The bird wakened from his sleep to be taught a tune sung to him in the dark, and left to sleep again,—the impression rests buried within him, and weeks afterward he comes out with the tune perfect. But these are only phenomena of memory—mine was more extraordinary. I am not sure that I can explain it to you. In my weak state, my understanding enfeebled as much as my body — my reason weaker than my memory, I could not help allowing myself to think that the constant repetition of that sentence was a warning sent to me from above. As I grew stronger, the superstition died away, but the sense of the thing still remained with me. It led me to

examine and reflect. It did more than all my mother's entreaties could effect. I had refused to see any human creature, but I now consented to admit a few. The charm was broken. I gave up my longing for solitude, my plan of retreat from the world; suffered myself to be carried where they pleased — to Brighton it was—to my mother's satisfaction. I was ready to appear in the ranks of fashion at the opening of the next London campaign. Automatically I 'ran my female exercises o'er' with as good grace as ever. I had followers and proposals; but my mother was again thrown into despair by what she called the short work I made with my admirers, scarcely allowing decent time for their turning into lovers, before I warned them not to think of me. I have heard that women who have suffered from man's inconstancy are disposed afterwards to revenge themselves by inflicting pain such as they have themselves endured, and delight in all the cruelty of coquetry It was not so with me. Mine was too deep a wound—skinned over—not callous, and all danger of its opening again I dreaded. I had lovers the more, perhaps, because I

cared not for them; till amongst them there came one who, as I saw, appreciated my character, and, as I perceived, was becoming seriously attached. To prevent danger to his happiness, as he would take no other warning, I revealed to him the state of my mind. However humiliating the confession, I thought it due to him. I told him that I had no heart to give—that I had received none in return for that with which I had parted, and that love was over with me.

'As a passion, it may be so—not as an affection,' was his reply.

The words opened to me a view of his character. I saw, too, by his love increasing with his esteem, the solidity of his understanding and the nobleness of his nature. He went deep and deeper into my mind, till he came to a spring of gratitude, which rose and overflowed, vivifying and fertilizing the seemingly barren waste. After the first whirlwind of passion, all seems a desert, and in the stillness and desolation there is no hope. After the volcano of passion has poured forth its burning mass and covered all, the power of vegetation seems buried for ever—buried it is, but not

extinct; it revives, it reproduces. Such is the beneficent law of nature. I believe it to be true that, after the first great misfortune, persons never return to be the same that they were before, but this I know—and this it is important you should be convinced of, my dear Helen—that the mind, though sorely smitten, can recover its powers. A mind, I mean, sustained by good principles, and by them made capable of persevering efforts for its own recovery. It may be sure of regaining, in time—observe, I say in time—its healthful tone.

"Time was given to me by that kind, that noble being, who devoted himself to me with a passion which I could not return — but, with such affection as I could give, and which he assured me would make his happiness, I determined to devote to him the whole of my future existence. Happiness for me, I thought, was gone, except in so far as I could make him happy.

"I married Lord Davenant—much against my mother's wish, for he was then the younger of three brothers, and with a younger brother's very small portion. Had it been a more splen-

did match, I do not think I could have been prevailed on to give my consent. I could not have been sure of my own motives, or rather my pride would not have been clear as to the opinion which others might form. This was a weakness, for in acting we ought to depend upon ourselves, and not to look for the praise or blame of others; but I let you see me as I am, or as I was: I do not insist, like Queen Elizabeth, in having my portrait without shade."

## CHAPTER VIII.

"I AM proud to tell you, that at the time I married we were so poor, that I was obliged to give up many of those luxuries to which I was entitled, and to which I had been so accustomed, that the doing without them had till then hardly come within my idea of possibility. Our whole establishment was on the most humble scale.

"I look back to this period of my life with the greatest satisfaction. I had exquisite pleasure, like all young people of sanguine temperament and generous disposition, in the consciousness of the capability of making sacrifices. This notion was my idol, the idol of the inmost sanctuary of my mind, and I worshipped it with all the energies of body and soul.

"In the course of a few years, my husband's two elder brothers died. If you have

any curiosity to know how, I will tell you, though indeed it is as little to the purpose as half the things people tell in their histories. The eldest, a homebred lordling, who, from the moment he slipped his mother's apron-strings, had fallen into folly, and then, to shew himself manly, run into vice, lost his life in a duel about some lady's crooked thumb, or more crooked mind.

"The second brother distinguished himself in the navy; he died the death of honour; he fell gloriously, and was by his country honoured—by his country mourned.

"After the death of this young man, the inheritance came to my husband. Fortune soon after poured in upon us a tide of wealth, swelled by collateral streams.

"You will wish to know what effect this change of circumstances produced upon my mind, and you shall, as far as I know it myself. I fancied that it would have made none, because I had been before accustomed to all the trappings of wealth; yet it did make a greater change in my feelings than you could have imagined, or I could have conceived. The

possibility of producing a great effect in society, of playing a distinguished part, and attaining an eminence which pleased my fancy, had never till now been within my reach. The incense of fame had been wafted near me, but not to me — near my husband I mean, yet not to him; I had heard his brother's name from the trumpet of fame, I longed to hear his own. I knew, what to the world was then unknown, his great talents for civil business, which, if urged into action, might make him distinguished as a statesman even beyond his hero brother, but I knew that in him ambition, if it ever awoke, must be awakened by love. Conscious of my influence, I determined to use it to the utmost.

"Lord Davenant had not at that time taken any part in politics, but from his connexions he could ask and obtain; and there was one in the world for whom I desired to obtain a favour of importance. It chanced that he, whom I have mentioned to you as my inconstant lover, now married to my lovely rival, was at this time in some difficulty about a command abroad. His connexions,

though of very high rank, were not now in power. He had failed in some military exploit which had formerly been entrusted to him. He was anxious to retrieve his character; his credit, his whole fate in life, depended on his obtaining this appointment, which, at my request, was secured to him by Lord Davenant. The day it was obtained was, I think, the proudest of my life. I was proud of returning good for evil; that was a Christian pride, if pride can be Christian. I was proud of shewing that in me there was none of the fury of a woman scorned — no sense of the injury of charms despised.

"But it was not yet the fulness of success; it had pained me in the midst of my internal triumph, that my husband had been obliged to use intermediate powers to obtain that which I should have desired should have been obtained by his own. Why should not he be in that first place of rule? He could hold the balance with a hand as firm, an eye as just. That he should be in the House of Peers was little satisfaction to me, unless distinguished among his peers. It was this distinction that I burned

to see obtained by Lord Davenant; I urged him forward then by all the motives which make ambition virtue. He was averse from public life, partly from indolence of temper, partly from sound philosophy: power was low in the scale in his estimate of human happiness; he saw how little can be effected of real good in public by any individual; he felt it scarcely worth his while to stir from his easy chair of domestic happiness. However, love urged him on, and inspired him, if not with ambition, at least with what looked like it in public. He entered the lists, and in the political tournament tilted successfully. Many were astonished, for, till they came against him in the joust, they had no notion of his weight, or of his skill in arms; and many seriously inclined to believe that Lord Davenant was only Lady Davenant in disguise, and all he said, wrote, and did, was attributed to me. Envy gratifies herself continually by thus shifting the merit from one person to another; in hopes that the actual quantity may be diminished, she tries to make out that it is never the real person, but somebody else who does that which is good. This silly, base

propensity might have cost me dear, would have cost me my husband's affections, had he not been a man, as there are few, above all jealousy of female influence or female talent; in short, he knew his own superiority, and needed not to measure himself to prove his height. He is quite content, rather glad, that every body should set him down as a common-place character. Far from being jealous of his wife's ruling him, he was amused by the notion: it flattered his pride, and it was convenient to his indolence; it fell in, too, with his peculiar humour. The more I retired, the more I was put forward, he, laughing behind me, prompted and forbade me to look back.

"Now, Helen, I am come to a point where ambition ceased to be virtue. But why should I tell you all this? no one is ever the better for the experience of another."

"Oh! I cannot believe that," cried Helen, "pray, pray go on; for though this is a sort of experience I can never want, yet it is most interesting to me to know all that you have felt."

"Thank you, my love, but as to your never

being in a similar situation, I don't see any impossibility You may marry a man of high political influence.

" Ambition first rose in my mind from the ashes of another passion. Fresh materials, of heterogeneous kinds, altered the colour, and changed the nature of the flame: I should have told you, but narrative is not my forte, I never can remember to tell things in their right order I forgot to tell you, that when Madame de Staël's book, 'Sur la Revolution Française,' came out, it made an extraordinary impression upon me. I turned, in the first place, as every body did, eagerly to the chapter on England, but, though my national feelings were gratified, my female pride was dreadfully mortified by what she says of the ladies of England; in fact she could not judge of them. They were afraid of her. They would not come out of their shells. What she called timidity, and what I am sure she longed to call stupidity, was the silence of overawed admiration, or mixed curiosity and discretion. Those who did venture, had not full possession of their powers, or in a hurry

shewed them in a wrong direction. She saw none of them in their natural state. She asserts that, though there may be women distinguished as writers in England, there are no ladies who have any great conversational and political influence in society, of that kind which, during *l'ancien regime*, was obtained in France by what they would call their *femmes marquantes*, such as Madame de Tencin, Madame du Deffand, Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse. This remark stung me to the quick, for my country and for myself, and raised in me a foolish, vain-glorious emulation, an ambition false in its objects, and unsuited to the manners, domestic habits, and public virtue of our country. I ought to have been gratified by her observing, that a lady is never to be met with in England, as formerly in France, at the Bureau du Ministre; and that in England there has never been any example of a woman's having known in public affairs, or at least told, what ought to have been kept secret. Between ourselves, I suspect she was a little mistaken in some of these assertions; but, be that as it may, I determined to prove that she was mis-

taken; I was conscious that I had more within me than I had yet brought out; I did not doubt that I had eloquence, if I had but courage to produce it. It is really astonishing what a mischievous effect those few passages produced on my mind. In London, one book drives out another, one impression, however deep, is effaced by the next shaking of the sand; but I was then in the country, for, unluckily for me, Lord Davenant had been sent away on some special embassy. Left alone with my nonsense, I set about, as soon as I was able, to assemble an audience round me, to exhibit myself in the character of a female politician, and I believe I had a notion at the same time of being the English Corinne. Rochefoucault, the dexterous anatomist of self-love, says that we confess our small faults, to persuade the world that we have no large ones. But, for my part, I feel that there are some small faults more difficult to me to confess than any large ones. Affectation, for instance; it is something so little, so paltry, it is more than a crime, it is a ridicule: I believe I did make myself completely ridiculous; I am glad

Lord Davenant was not by, it lasted but a short time. Our dear good friend D—— (you knew D—— at Florence?) could not bear to see it; his regard for Lord Davenant urged him the more to disenchant me, and bring me back, before his return, to my natural form. The disenchantment was rather rude.

"One evening, after I had been snuffing up incense till I was quite intoxicated, when my votaries had departed, and we were alone together, I said to him, 'Allow that this is what would be called at Paris, *un grand succés*.'

"D—— made no reply, but stood opposite to me playing in his peculiar manner with his great snuff-box, slowly swaying the snuff from side to side. Knowing this to be a sign that he was in some great dilemma, I asked of what he was thinking. 'Of you,' said he. 'And what of me?' In his French accent he repeated those two provoking lines—

> 'Now wit, like wine, intoxicates the brain,
> Too strong for feeble women to sustain.'

"'To my face?' said I, smiling, for I tried to command my temper.

"'Better than behind your back, as others do,' said he.

"'Behind my back!' said I, 'impossible.'

"'Perfectly possible,' said he, 'as I could prove if you were strong enough to bear it.'

"'Quite strong enough,' I said, and bade him speak on.

"'Suppose you were offered,' said he, 'the fairy-ring that rendered the possessor invisible, and enabled him to hear everything that was said, and all that was thought of him, would you throw it away, or put it on your finger?'

"'Put it on my finger,' I replied; 'and this instant, for a true friend is better than a magic ring, I put it on.'

"'You are very brave,' said he, 'then you shall hear the lines I heard in a rival salon, repeated by him who last wafted the censer to you to-night.' He repeated a kind of doggrel pasquinade, beginning with—

'Tell me, gentles, have you seen,
The prating she, the mock Corinne.'

"D——, who had the courage for my good to inflict the blow, could not stay to see its effect, and this time I was left alone, not with

my nonsense, but with my reason. It was quite sufficient. I was cured. My only consolation in my disgrace was, that I honourably kept D——'s counsel. The friend who composed the lampoon, from that day to this never knew that I had heard it; though I must own I often longed to tell him, when he was offering his incense again, that I wished he would reverse his practice, and let us have the satire in my presence, and keep the flattery for my absence. The graft of affectation, which was but a poor weak thing, fell off at once, but the root of the evil had not yet been reached. My friend D—— had not cut deep enough, or perhaps feared to cut away too much that was sound and essential to life: my political ambition remained, and on Lord Davenant's return sprang up in full vigour.

"Now it is all over, I can analyse and understand my own motives: when I first began my political course, I really and truly had no love for power; full of other feelings, I was averse from it; it was absolutely disagreeable to me; but as people acquire a taste for drams after making faces at first swallowing, so I,

from experience of the excitation, acquired the habit, the love, of this mental dram-drinking; besides, I had such delightful excuses for myself: I didn't love power for its own sake, it was never used for myself, always for others; ever with my old principle of sacrifice in full play: this flattering unction I laid to my soul, and it long hid from me its weakness, its gradual corruption.

"The first instance in which I used my influence, and by my husband's intervention obtained a favour of some importance, the thing done, though actually obtained by private favour, was in a public point of view well done and fit to be done; but when in time Lord Davenant had reached that eminence which had been the summit of my ambition, and when once it was known that I had influence (and in making it known between jest and earnest Lord Davenant was certainly to blame), numbers of course were eager to avail themselves of the discovery, swarms born in the noontide ray, or such as salute the rising morn, buzzed round me. I was good-natured and glad to do the service, and proud

to shew that I could do it. I thought I had some right to share with Lord Davenant, at least, the honour and pleasures of patronage, and so he willingly allowed it to be, as long as my objects were well chosen, though he said to me once with a serious smile, 'The patronage of Europe would not satisfy you; you would want India, and if you had India, you would sigh for the new world.' I only laughed, and said 'The same thought as Lord Chesterfield's, only more neatly put. 'If all Ireland were given to such a one for his patrimony, he'd ask for the Isle of Man for his cabbage-garden.' Lord Davenant did not smile. I felt a little alarmed, and a feeling of estrangement began between us.

"I recollect one day his seeing a note on my table from one of my *protegés*, thanking me outrageously, and extolling my very obliging disposition. He read, and threw it down, and with one of his dry-humour smiles repeated half to himself

——— 'By flatterers besieged,
And so obliging that she ne'er obliged.'

"I thought these lines were in the Characters of Women, and I hunted all through them in

vain; at last I found them in the character of a man, which could not suit me, and I was pacified, and, what is extraordinary, my conscience quite put at ease.

"The week afterwards I went to make some request for a friend: my little boy — for I had a dear little boy then, had come in along with mamma. Lord Davenant complied with my request, but unwillingly I saw, and as if he felt it a weakness; and, putting his hand upon the curly-pated little fellow's head, he said, 'This boy rules Greece, I see.' The child was sent for the Grecian history, his father took him on his knee, while he read the anecdote, and as he ended he whispered in the child's ear, 'Tell mamma this must not be; papa should be ruled only by justice.' He really had public virtue, I only talked of it.

"After this you will wonder that I could go on, but I did.

"I had at that time a friend, who talked always most romantically, and acted most selfishly, and for some time I never noticed the inconsistency between her words and actions. In fact she had two currents in her mind, two

selves, one romantic from books, the other selfish from worldly education and love of fashion, and of the goods of this world. She had charming manners, which I thought went for nothing with me, but which I found stood for everything. In short, she was as caressing, as graceful, in her little ways, and as selfish as a cat. She had claws too, but at first I only felt the velvet.

"It was for this woman that I hazarded my highest happiness — my husband's esteem, and for the most paltry object imaginable. She wanted some petty place for some man who was to marry her favourite maid. When I first mentioned it to him, Lord Davenant coldly said, 'It can't be done,' and his pen went on very quickly with the letter he was writing. Vexed and ashamed, and the more vexed because ashamed, I persisted. 'Cannot be done for *me?* said I.' 'Not for anybody,' said he— 'by me, at least.'—I thought — Helen, I am ashamed to tell you what I thought, but I will tell it you, because it will shew you how a mind may be debased by the love of power, or rather by the consequence which its possession

bestows.' I thought he meant to point out to me that, although he would not do it, I might *get it done.* And, speaking as if to myself, I said, 'Then I 'll go to such a person, then I 'll use such and such ways and means.'

"Looking up from his writing at me, with a look such as I had never seen from him before, he replied, in the words of a celebrated minister, '*C'est facile de se servir de pareils moyens, c'est difficile de s'y resoudre.*'

"I admired him, despised myself, left the room, and went and told my friend decidedly it could not be done. That instant, she became my enemy, and I felt her claws. I was proud of the wounds, and shewed them to my husband. Now, Helen, you think I am cured for ever, and safe. Alas! no, my dear, it is not so easy to cure habit. I have however some excuse, let me put it forward; the person for whom I again transgressed was my mother, and for her I was proud of doing the utmost, because she had, as I could not forget, been ready to sacrifice my happiness to her speculations. She had left off building castles in the air, but she had outbuilt herself on earth. She had

often recourse to me in her difficulties, and I supplied funds, as well I might, for I had a most liberal allowance from my most liberal Lord; but schemes of my own, very patriotic but not overwise, had in process of time drained my purse. I had a school at Cecilhurst, and a lace manufactory, and to teach my little girls I must needs bring over lace-makers from Flanders, and Lisle thread, at an enormous expense: I shut my lace-makers up in a room (for secrecy was necessary), where, like spiders, they quarrelled with each other and fought, and the whole failed.

"Another scheme, very patriotic too, cost me an immensity: trying to make Indian cachemires in England, very beautiful they were, but they left not the tenth part of a penny in my private purse, and then my mother wanted some thousands for a new dairy; dairies were then the fashion, and her's was to be floored with the finest Dutch tiles, furnished with Sevre china, with plate-glass windows, and a porch hung with French mirrors; so she set me to represent to Lord Davenant her very distressed situation, and to present a petition from

her for a pension. The first time I urged my mother's request, Lord Davenant said, 'I am sure, Anne, that you do not know what you are asking.' I desisted. I did not indeed well understand the business, nor at all comprehend that I was assisting a fraudulent attempt to obtain public money for a private purpose, but I wished to have the triumph of success, I wished to feel my own influence.

"Had it been foretold to me that I could so forget myself in the intoxication of political power, how I should have disdained the prophecy, 'Lord, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?' There is a fine sermon of Blair's on this subject; it had early made a great impression upon me; but what are good impressions, good feelings, good impulses, good intentions, good anything, without principle?

"My mother wondered how I could so easily take a refusal; she piqued my pride by observing that she was sorry my influence had declined; her pity, so near contempt, wounded me, and I unadvisedly exclaimed that my influence had in no way declined. Scarcely had

I uttered the words when I saw the inference to which they laid me open, that I had not used my influence to the utmost for her. My mother had quite sense and just feeling enough to refrain from marking this in words. She noted it only by an observing look, followed by a sigh. She confessed that I had always been so kind, so much kinder than she could have expected, that she would say no more. This was more to the purpose with me than if she had talked for hours. I heard fresh sighs, and saw tears begin to flow — a mother's sighs and tears it is difficult, and I felt it was shameful, to bear. I was partly melted, much confused, and hurried too by visiters coming in, and I hastily promised that I would try once more what I could do. The moment I had time for reflection I repented of what I had promised. But the words were past recall. It was so disagreeable to me to speak about the affair to my husband, that I wanted to get it off my mind as soon as possible, but the day passed without my being able to find a moment when I could speak to Lord Davenant in private. Company stayed till late, my mother the latest. At part-

ing, as she kissed me, calling me her dearest Anne, she said she was convinced I could do whatever I pleased with Lord Davenant, and as she was going down stairs, added, she was sure the first words she should hear from me in the morning would be 'victory, victory.'

"I hated myself for admitting the thought, and yet there it was; I let it in, and could not get it out. From what an indescribable mixture of weak motives or impulses, and often without one reasonable principle, do we act in the most important moments of life. Even as I opened the door of his room I hesitated, my heart beat forebodingly, but I thought I could not retreat and I went in.

"He was standing on the hearth looking weary, but a reviving smile came on seeing me, and he held out his hand—'My comfort always,' said he.

"I took his hand, and, hesitating, was again my better self; but I would not go back, nor could I begin with any preface.—Thank Heaven that was impossible. I began:

"'Davenant, I am come to ask you a favour, and you must do it for me.'

"'I hope it is in my power, my dear,' said he; 'I am sure you would not ask——' and there he stopped.

"I told him it was in his power, and that I would not ask it for any creature living, but——' He put his hand upon my lips, told me he knew what I was going to say, and begged me not to say it; but I, hoping to carry it off playfully, kissed his hand, and putting it aside said, 'I must ask, and you must grant this to my mother.' He replied, 'It cannot be, Anne, consistently with public justice, and with my public duty. I——'

"'Nonsense, nonsense,' I said, 'such words are only to mask a refusal.' *Mask*, I remember, was the word that hurt him. Of all I could have used, it was the worst: I knew it the instant I had said it. Lord Davenant stepped back and with such a look! You, Helen, who have seen only his benign countenance, his smiling eyes, cannot conceive it. I am sure he must have seen how much it alarmed me, for suddenly it changed, and I saw all the melting softness of love.

"Oh fool! vain wicked fool that I was! I

thought of 'victory,' and pursued it. My utmost power of persuasion—words—smiles—and tears I tried—and tried in vain; and then I could not bear to feel that I had in vain made this trial of power and love. Shame and pride and anger seized me by turns, and raised such a storm within me—such confusion—that I knew not what I did or said. And he was so calm! looked so at least, though I am sure he was not. His self-possession piqued and provoked me past all bearing. I cannot tell you exactly how it was—it was so dreadfully interesting to me that I am unable to recall the exact words; but I remember at last hearing him say, in a voice I had never before heard, 'Lady Davenant!'—He had never called me so before; he had always called me 'Anne,' it seemed as if he had dismissed me from his heart.

"'Call me Anne! O call me Anne!'

"And he yielded instantly, he called me Anne, and caressing me, 'his Anne.'

"O Helen! never do as I did. I whispered, 'Then my love, you will do this for me—for me, your own Anne?'

"He put me gently away, and leaned against

the chimney-piece in silence. Then turning to me, in a low suppressed voice, he said:

"'I have loved you—love you as much as man can love woman, there is nothing I would not sacrifice for you except——'

"'No exceptions!' cried I, in an affected tone of gaiety.

'Except honour,' he repeated firmly.—Helen, my dear, you are of a generous nature, so am I, but the demon of pride was within me, it made me long to try the extent of my power. Disappointed, I sunk to meanness; never, never, however tempted, however provoked, never do as I did, never reproach a friend with any sacrifice you have made for them; this is a meanness which your friend may forgive, but which you can never forgive yourself.

"I reproached him with the sacrifice of my feelings, which I had made in marrying him! His answer was, 'I feel that what you say is true, I am now convinced you are incapable of loving me; and since I cannot make you happy, we had better——part.'

"These were the last words I heard. The blow was wholly unexpected.

"Whether I sunk down, or threw myself at his feet, I know not; but when I came to myself he was standing beside me. There were other faces, but my eyes saw only his: I felt his hand holding mine, I pressed it, and said 'Forget.' He stooped down and whispered 'It is forgotten.'

"I believe there is nothing can touch a generous mind so much as the being treated with perfect generosity—nothing makes us so deeply feel our own fault."

Lady Davenant was here so much moved that she could say no more. By an involuntary motion, she checked the reins, and the horses stopped, and she continued quite silent for a few minutes: at length two or three deeply drawn sighs seemed to relieve her; she looked up, and her attention seemed to be caught by a bird that was singing sweetly on a branch over their heads. She asked what bird it was? Helen shewed it to her where it sat: she looked up and smiled, touched the horses with her whip, and went on where she had left off.——

"The next thing was the meeting my mother

in the morning; I prepared myself for it, and thought I was now armed so strong in honesty that I could go through with it well: my morality however was a little nervous, was fluttered by the knock at the door, and, when I heard her voice as she came towards my room, asking eagerly if I was alone, I felt a sickness at the certainty that I must at once crush her hopes. But I stood resolved; my eyes fixed on the door through which she was to enter. She came in, to my astonishment, with a face radiant with joy, and hastening to me she embraced me with the warmest expression of fondness and gratitude.—I stood petrified as I heard her talk of my kindness — my generosity. I asked what she could mean, said there must be some mistake. But holding before my eyes a note, 'Can there be any mistake in this?' said she. That note, for I can never forget it, I will repeat to you.

"'What you wish can be done in a better manner than you proposed. The public must have no concern with it; Lady Davenant must have the pleasure of doing it her own

way; an annuity to the amount required shall be punctually paid to your banker. The first instalment will be in his hands by the time you receive this.—DAVENANT.'

"When I had been formerly disenchanted from my trance of love, the rudeness of the shock had benumbed all my faculties, and left me scarcely power to think; but now, when thus recovered from the delirium of power, I was immediately in perfect possession of my understanding, and when I was made to comprehend the despicable use I would have made of my influence, or the influence my husband possessed, I was so shocked, that I have ever since, I am conscious, in speaking of any political corruption, rather exaggerated my natural abhorrence of it. Not from the mean and weak idea of convincing the world how foreign all such wrong was to my soul, but because it really is foreign to it, because I know how it can debase the most honourable characters; I do not feel so much shocked at the criminal as at the crime, because I saw it once in all its hideousness so near myself.

"A change in the ministry took place this

year, Lord Davenant's resignation was sent in and accepted, and in retirement I had not only leisure to be good, but also leisure to cultivate my mind. Of course I had read all such reading as ladies read, but this was very different from the kind of study that would enable me to keep pace with Lord Davenant and his highly informed friends. Many of these, more men of thought than of show, visited us from time to time in the country. Though I had passed very well in London society, blue, red, and green, literary, fashionable, and political, and had been extolled as both witty and wise, especially when my husband was in place; yet when I came into close contact with minds of a higher order, I felt my own deficiencies. Lord Davenant's superiority I particularly perceived in the solidity of the ground he uniformly took and held in reasoning. And when I, too confident, used to venture rashly, and often found myself surrounded, and in imminent danger in argument, he often used to bring me off and ably cover my retreat, and looked so pleased, so proud, when I made a happy hit, or jumped to a right conclusion.

"But what I most liked, most admired, in him was, that he never triumphed or took unfair advantages on the strength of his learning, of his acquirements, or of what I may call his logical training.

"I mention these seeming trifles because it is not always in the great occasions of life that a generous disposition shews itself in the way which we most feel. Little instances of generosity shewn in this way, unperceived by others, have gone most deeply into my mind; and have most raised my opinion of his character. The sense that I was over rather than undervalued, made me the more ready to acknowledge and feel my own deficiencies. I felt the truth of an aphorism of Lord Verulam's, which is now come down to the copy-books; that 'knowledge is power.' Having made this notable discovery, I set about with all my might to acquire knowledge. You may smile, and think that this was only in a new form the passion for power; no, it was something better. Not to do myself injustice, I now felt the pure desire of knowledge, and enjoyed the pure pleasure of obtaining it: assisted, supported,

and delighted, by the sympathy of a superior mind.

"As to intellectual happiness, this was the happiest time of my life. As if my eyes had been rubbed by your favourite dervise in the Arabian tales, with his charmed ointment, which opened at once to view all the treasures of the earth, I saw and craved the boundless treasures opened to my view. I now wanted to read all that Lord Davenant was reading, that I might be up to his ideas, but this was not to be done in an instant. There was a Frenchwoman who complained that she never could learn anything, because she could not find anybody to teach her all she wanted to know in two words. I was not quite so *exigeante* as this lady; but, after having skated on easily and rapidly far on the superficies of knowledge, it was difficult and rather mortifying to have to go back and begin at the beginning. Yet, when I wanted to go a little deeper, and really to understand what I was about, this was essentially necessary. I could not have got through without the assistance of one who shewed me what I might safely leave unlearned, and who

pointed out what fruit was worth climbing for, what would only turn to ashes.

"This happy time of my life too quickly passed away. It was interrupted, however, not by any fault or folly of my own, but by an infliction from the hand of Providence, to which I trust I submitted with resignation—we lost our dear little boy; my second boy was born dead, and my confinement was followed by long and severe illness. I was ordered to try the air of Devonshire.

"One night—now, my dear, I have kept for the last the only romantic incident in my life—one night, a vessel was wrecked upon our coast; one of the passengers, a lady, an invalid, was brought to our house; I hastened to her assistance;—it was my beautiful rival!

"She was in a deep decline, and had been at Lisbon for some time, but she was now sent home by the physicians, as they send people from one country to another to die. The captain of the ship in which she was, mistook the lights upon the coast, and ran the ship ashore near to our house.

" Of course we did for her all we could, but she was dying: she knew nothing of my history, and I trust I soothed her last moments—she died in my arms.

" She had one child, a son, then at Eton: we sent for him, he arrived too late, the feeling he shewed interested us deeply; we kept him with us some time, he was grateful, and afterwards as he grew up he often wrote to me. His letters you have read."

" Mr. Beauclerc!" said Helen.

" Mr. Beauclerc.—I had not seen him for some time, when General Clarendon presented him to me as his ward at Florence, where I had opportunities of essentially serving him.

" You may now understand, my dear, why I had expected that Mr. Granville Beauclerc might have preferred coming to Clarendon Park this last month of my stay in England to the pleasures of London. I was angry, I own, but after five minutes' grace I cooled, saw that I must be mistaken, and came to the just conclusion of the old poet, that no one sinks at once to the depth of ill, and ingratitude I consider as the depth of ill. I

opine, therefore, that some stronger feeling than friendship now operates to detain Granville Beauclerc. In that case I forgive him, but, for his own sake, and with such a young man I should say for the sake of society—of the public good — for he will end in public life, I hope the present object is worthy of him, whoever she may be.

" Have I anything more to tell you? Yes, I should say that, when by changes in the political world Lord Davenant was again in power, I had learned, if not to be less ambitious, at least to shew it less. D——, who knew always how to put sense into my mind, so that I found it there, and thought it completely my own, had once said that 'every public man who has a cultivated and high-minded wife has in fact two selves, each holding watch and ward for the other.' The notion pleased me—pleased both my fancy and my reason; I acted on it, and Lord Davenant assures me that I have been this second self to him, and I am willing to believe it, first because he is a man of strict truth, and secondly,

because every woman is willing to believe what she wishes."

Lady Davenant paused, and after some minutes of reflection, said, "I confess, however, that I have not reason to be quite satisfied with myself as a mother; I did not attend sufficiently to Cecilia's early education: engrossed with politics, I left her too much to governesses, at one period to a very bad one. I have done what I can to remedy this, and you have done more perhaps; but I much fear that the early neglect can never be completely repaired: she is, however, married to a man of sense, and when I go to Russia I shall think with satisfaction that I leave you with her."

After expressing how deeply she had been interested in all that she had heard, and how grateful she felt for the confidence reposed in her, Helen said she could not help wishing that Cecilia knew all that had been just told to her of Lady Davenant's history. If Cecilia could but know all the tenderness of her mother's heart, how much less would she fear, how much more would she love her!"

"It would answer no purpose," replied Lady Davenant; "there are persons with intrinsic differences of character, who, explain as you will, can never understand one another beyond a certain point. Nature and art forbid—no spectacles you can furnish will remedy certain defects of vision. Cecilia sees as much as she can ever see of my character, and I see, in the best light, the whole of her's. So Helen, my dear, take the advice of a Scotch proverb —proverbs are vulgar, because they usually contain common sense—'Let well alone.'

"You are really a very good little friend," added she, "but keep my personal narrative for your own use."

## CHAPTER IX.

It was late before they reached home, and Helen dressed as fast as possible, for the General's punctual habits required that all should assemble in the drawing-room five minutes at least before dinner. Helen was coming down the private turret staircase, which led from the family apartments to the great hall, when, just at the turn, and in the most awkward way possible, she met a gentleman, a stranger, where never stranger had been seen by her before, running up full speed, so that they had but barely space and time to clear out of each other's way. Pardons were begged of course. The manner and voice of the stranger were particularly gentlemanlike. A servant followed with his portmanteau, in-

quiring into which room Mr. Beauclerc was to go?

"Mr. Beauclerc!"—When Helen got to the drawing-room, and found that not even the General was there, she thought she could have time to run up the great staircase to Lady Davenant's room, and tell her that Mr. Beauclerc was come.

"My dear Lady Davenant, Mr. Beauclerc!" —He was there! and she made her retreat as quickly as possible. The quantity that had been said about him, and the awkward way in which they had thus accidentally met, made her feel much embarrassed when they were regularly introduced.

At the beginning of dinner, Helen fancied that there was unusual silence and constraint; perhaps this might be so, or perhaps people were really hungry, or perhaps Mr. Beauclerc had not yet satisfied the General and Lady Davenant; however, towards the end of dinner, and at the dessert, he was certainly entertaining; and Lady Cecilia appeared particularly amused by an account which he was giving of a little French piece he had seen just before he left

London, called "Les Premières Amours," and Helen might have been amused too, but that Lady Cecilia called upon her to listen, and, Mr. Beauclerc turning his eyes upon her, she saw or fancied that he was put out in his story, and though he went on with perfect good breeding, yet it was evidently with diminished spirit. As soon as politeness permitted, at the close of the story, she, to relieve him and herself, turned to the aide-de-camp on her other side, and devoted or seemed to devote to him her exclusive attention. He was always tiresome to her, but now more than ever; he went on, when once set a-going, about his horses and his dogs, while she had the mortification of hearing, almost immediately after her seceding, that Mr. Beauclerc recovered the life and spirit of his tone, and was in full and delightful enjoyment of conversation with Lady Cecilia. Something very entertaining caught her ear every now and then; but, with her eyes fixed in the necessary direction, it was impossible to make it out, through the aide-de-camp's never-ending tediousness. She thought the sitting after dinner never would terminate,

though it was in fact rather shorter than usual.

As soon as they reached the drawing-room, Lady Cecilia asked her mother what was the cause of Granville's delay in town, and why he had come to-day, after he had written it was impossible?

Lady Davenant answered, that he had 'trampled,' as Lord Chatham did, 'on impossibilities.' "It was not a physical impossibility, it seems."

"I 'm sure — I hope," continued Cecilia, "that none of the Beltravers' set had any thing to do with his delay, yet from a word or two the General let fall, I 'm almost sure that they have—Lady Blanche, I 'm afraid——" There she stopped. "If it were only a money difficulty with Lord Beltravers," resumed she, "that might be easily settled, for Beauclerc is rich enough."

"Yes," said Lady Davenant, "but rashly generous; an uncommon fault in these days, when young men are in general selfishly prudent or selfishly extravagant."

"I hope," said Cecilia, — "I hope Lady

Blanche Forrester will not——" there she paused, and consulted her mother's countenance; her mother answered that Beauclerc had not spoken to her of Lady Blanche. After putting her hopes and fears, questions and conjectures, into every possible form and direction, Lady Cecilia was satisfied that her mother knew no more than herself, and this was a great comfort.

When Mr. Beauclerc reappeared, Helen was glad that she was settled at an embroidery frame, at the furthest end of the room, as there, apart from the world, she felt safe from all cause for embarrassment, and there she continued happy till some one came to raise the light of the lamp over her head. It was Mr. Beauclerc, and, as she looked up, she gave a foolish little start of surprise, and then all her confusion returning, with thanks scarce audible, her eyes were instantly fixed on the geranium leaf she was embroidering. He asked how she could by lamplight distinguish blue from green? a simple and not very alarming question, but she did not hear the words rightly, and thinking he asked whether she

wished for a skreen, she answered "No, thank you."

Lady Cecilia laughed, and covering Helen's want of hearing by Beauclerc's want of sight, explained—"Do not you see, Granville, the silk-cards are written upon, 'blue' and 'green;' there can be no mistake."

Mr. Beauclerc made a few more laudable attempts at conversation with Miss Stanley, but she, still imagining that this was forced, could not in return say anything but what seemed forced and unnatural, and as unlike her usual self as possible. Lady Cecilia tried to relieve her; she would have done better to have let it alone, for Beauclerc was not of the French opinion that *La modestie n'est bonne qu'à quinze ans*, and to him it appeared only a graceful timidity. Helen retired earlier than any one else, and, when she thought over her foolish awkwardness, felt as much ashamed as if Mr Beauclerc had actually heard all that Lady Cecilia had said about him—had seen all her thoughts, and understood the reason of her confusion. At last, when Lady Cecilia came into her room before she went to bed, she began

with—"I am sure you are going to scold me, and I deserve it; I am so provoked with myself, and the worst of it is, that I do not think I shall ever get over it—I am afraid I shall be just as foolish again to-morrow."

"I could find it in my heart to scold you to death," said Lady Cecilia, "but that I am vexed myself."

Then hesitating, and studying Helen's countenance, she seemed doubtful how to proceed. Either she was playing with Helen's curiosity, or she was really herself perplexed. She made two or three beginnings, each a little inconsistent with the other.

"Mamma is always right; with her—'coming events' really and truly 'cast their shadows before.' I do believe she has the fatal gift, the coming ill to know!"

"Ill!" said Helen; "what ill is coming?"

"After all, however, it may not be an ill," said Lady Cecilia; "it may be all for the best; yet I am shockingly disappointed, though I declare I never formed any——"

"Oh, my dear Cecilia, do tell me at once what it is you mean."

"I mean, that Granville Beauclerc, like all men of genius, has acted like the greatest fool."

"What has he done?"

"He is absolutely—you must look upon him in future—as a married man."

Helen was delighted. Cecilia could form no further schemes on her account, and she felt relieved from all her awkwardness.

"Dearest Helen, this is well at all events," cried Cecilia, seeing her cleared countenance. "This comforts me; you are at ease; and, if I have caused you one uncomfortable evening, I am sure you are consoled for it by the reflection that my mother was right, and I, as usual, wrong. But, Helen," continued she earnestly, "remember that this is not to be known; remember you must not breathe the least hint of what I have told you to mamma or the General."

Something more than astonishment appeared in Helen's countenance. "And is it possible that Mr Beauclerc does not tell them,—does not trust his guardian and such a friend as your mother?" said Helen.

"He will tell them, he will tell them—but not

yet; perhaps not till—he is not to see his fiancée —they have for some reason agreed to be separated for some time—I do not know exactly, but surely everybody may choose their own opportunity for telling their own secrets. In fact, Helen, the lady, I understand, made it a point with him that nothing should be said of it yet —to any one."

"But he told it to you?"

"No, indeed, he did not tell it; I found it out, and he could not deny it; but he charged me to keep it secret, and I would not have told it to any body living but yourself; and to you, after all I had said about him, I felt it was necessary — I thought I was bound — in short, I thought it would set things to rights, and put you at your ease at once."

And then, with more earnestness, she again pressed upon Helen a promise of secrecy, especially towards Lady Davenant. Helen submitted. Cecilia embraced her affectionately, and left the room. Quite tired and quite happy, Helen was in bed and asleep in a few minutes.

Not the slightest suspicion crossed her mind

that all her friend had been telling her was not perfectly true. To a more practised, a less confiding, person the perplexity of Lady Cecilia's prefaces, and some contradictions or inconsistencies, might have suggested doubts; but Helen's general confidence in her friend's truth had never yet been seriously shaken. Lady Davenant she had always thought prejudiced on this point, and too severe. If there had been in early childhood a bad habit of inaccuracy in Cecilia, Helen thought it long since cured; and so perhaps it was, till she formed a friendship abroad with one who had no respect for truth.

But of this Helen knew nothing; and, in fact, till now Lady Cecilia's aberrations had been always trifling, almost imperceptible, errors, such as only her mother's strictness or Miss Clarendon's scrupulosity could detect. Nor would Cecilia have ventured upon a decided, an important, false assertion, except for a kind purpose. Never in her life had she told a falsehood to injure any human creature, or one that she could foresee might, by any possi-

bility, do harm to any living being. But here was a friend, a very dear friend, in an awkward embarrassment, and brought into it by her means; and, by a little innocent stretching of the truth she could at once, she fancied, set all to rights. The moment the idea came into her head, upon the spur of the occasion, she resolved to execute it directly. It was settled between the drawing-room door and her dressing-room. And when thus executed successfully, with happy sophistry she justified it to herself. "After all," said she to herself, "though it was not absolutely true, it was *ben trovato,* it was as near the truth, perhaps, as possible. Beauclerc's best friends really feared that he was falling in love with the lady in question. It was very likely, and too likely, it might end in his marrying this Lady Blanche Forrester. And, on every account, and every way, it was for the best that Helen should consider him as a married man. This would restore Helen by one magical stroke to herself, and release her from that wretched state in which she could neither please nor be pleased."

And, as far as this good effect upon Helen was concerned, Lady Cecilia's plan was judicious; it succeeded admirably.

Wonderful! how a few words spoken, a single idea taken out of or put into the mind, can make such a difference, not only in the mental feelings, but in the whole bodily appearance, and in the actual powers of perception and use of our senses.

When Helen entered the breakfast-room the next morning, she looked, and moved, and felt, quite a different creature from what she had been the preceding day. She had recovered the use of her understanding, and she could hear and see quite distinctly; and the first she saw was, that nobody was thinking particularly about her; and now she for the first time actually saw Mr. Beauclerc. She had before looked at him without seeing him, and really did not know what sort of looking person he was, except that he was like a gentleman; of that she had a sort of intuitive perception;—as Cuvier could tell from the first sight of a single bone what the animal was, what were its habits, and to what class it belonged,—so any

person early used to good company can, by the first gesture, the first general manner of being, passive or active, tell whether a stranger, even scarcely seen, is or is not a gentleman.

At the beginning of breakfast, Mr. Beauclerc had all the perfect English quiet of look and manners, with somewhat of a high-bred air of indifference to all sublunary things, yet saying and doing whatever was proper for the present company; yet it was done and said like one in a dream, performed like a somnambulist, correctly from habit, but all unconsciously. He awakened from his reverie the moment General Clarendon came in, and he asked eagerly,

"General! how far is it to Old Forest?" These were the first words which he pronounced like one wide awake. "I must ride there this morning; it 's absolutely necessary."

The General replied that he did not see the necessity.

"But when I do, sir," cried Beauclerc; the natural vivacity of the young man breaking through the conventional manner. Next moment, with an humble look, he hoped that

the General would accompany him, and the look of proud humility vanished from his countenance the next instant, because the General demurred, and Beauclerc added, "Will not you oblige me so far? Then I must go by myself."

The General, seeming to go on with his own thoughts, and not to be moved by his ward's impatience, talked of a review that was to be put off, and at length found that he could accompany him. Beauclerc then, delighted, thanked him warmly.

"What is the object of this essential visit to Old Forest, may I ask?" said Lady Davenant.

"To see a dilapidated house," said the General.

"To save a whole family from ruin," cried Beauclerc; "to restore a man of first-rate talents to his place in society."

"Pshaw!" said the General.

"Why that contemptuous exclamation, my dear General?" said Beauclerc.

"I have told you, and again I tell you, the thing is impossible!" said the General.

"So I hear you say, sir," replied his ward; "but till I am convinced, I hold to my project."

"And what is your project, Granville?" said Lady Davenant.

"I will explain it to you when we are alone," said Beauclerc.

"I beg your pardon, I was not aware that there was any mystery," said Lady Davenant.

"No mystery," said Beauclerc, "only about lending some money to a friend."

"To which I will not consent," said the General.

"Why not, sir?" said Beauclerc, throwing back his head with an air of defiance in his countenance; there was as he looked at his guardian a quick, mutable succession of feelings, in striking contrast with the fixity of the General's appearance.

"I have given you my reasons, Beauclerc," said the General. "It is unnecessary to repeat what I have said, you will do no good."

"No good, General? When I tell you that if I lend Beltravers the money, to put his place in repair, to put it in such a state that his sisters

could live in it, he would no longer be a banished man, a useless absentee, a wanderer abroad, but he would come and settle at Old Forest, re-establish the fortune and respectability of his family, and above all, save his own character and happiness. Oh, my dear General!"

General Clarendon, evidently moved by his ward's benevolent enthusiasm, paused, rubbed his forehead slowly, and said that there were many recollections which made it rather painful to him to revisit Old Forest. Still he would do it for Beauclerc, since nothing but seeing the place would convince him of the impracticability of his scheme. "I have not been at Old Forest," continued the General, "since I was a boy—since it was deserted by the owners, and sadly changed I shall find it.

"In former times these Forresters were a respectable, good old English family, till the second wife, pretty and silly, took a fancy for figuring in London, where of course she was nobody. Then, to make herself somebody, she forced her husband to stand for the county. A contested election—bribery—a petition—another election—ruinous expense. Then that

Beltravers title coming to them; and they were to live up to it,—and beyond their income. The old story—over head and shoulders in debt. Then the new story,—that they must go abroad for economy!"

"Economy! The cant of all those who have not courage to retrench at home," said Lady Davenant.

"They must," they said, "live abroad, it is so cheap," continued the General. "So cheap to leave their house to go to ruin! Cheap education too! and so good—and what does it come to?"

"A cheap provision it is for a family in many cases," said Lord Davenant. "Wife, son, and daughter, Satan, are thy own."

"Not in this case," cried Beauclerc; "you cannot mean, I hope."

"I can answer for one, the daughter, at least," said Lady Davenant; "that Mad. de St. Cimon, whom we saw abroad, at Florence, you know, Cecilia, with whom I would not let you form an acquaintance."

"Your Ladyship was quite right," said the General.

Beauclerc could not say, "Quite wrong,"—and he looked—suffering.

"I know nothing of the son," pursued Lady Davenant.

"I do," said Beauclerc; "he is my friend."

"I thought he had been a very distressed man, that young Beltravers," said the aide-de-camp.

"And if he were, that would not prevent my being his friend, sir," said Beauclerc.

"Of course," said the aide-de-camp, "I only asked."

"He is a man of genius and feeling," continued Beauclerc, turning to Lady Davenant.

"But I never heard you mention Lord Beltravers before. How long has he been your friend?" said Lady Davenant.

Beauclerc hesitated. The General without hesitation answered, "Three weeks and one day."

"I do not count my friendship by days or weeks," said Beauclerc.

"No, my dear Beauclerc," said the General: "well would it be for you if you would condescend to any such common-sense measure."

He rose from the breakfast-table as he spoke, and rang the bell to order the horses.

"You are prejudiced against Beltravers, General; but you will think better of him, I am sure, when you know him."

"You will think worse of him when you know him, I suspect," replied the General.

"Suspect! But since you only *suspect*," said Beauclerc, "we English do not condemn on suspicion, unheard, unseen."

"Not unheard," said the General, "I have heard enough of him."

"From the reports of his enemies," said Beauclerc.

"I do not usually form my judgment," replied the General, "from reports either of friends or enemies; I have not the honour to know any of Lord Beltravers' enemies."

"Enemies of Lord Beltravers!" exclaimed Lady Davenant. "What right has he to enemies as if he were a great man?—a person of whom nobody ever heard, setting up to have enemies! But now-a-days, these candidates for fame, these would-be-celebrated, set up their enemies as they would their equipages, on cre-

dit—then, by an easy process of prospective logic, make out the syllogism thus: — Every great man has enemies, therefore, every man who has enemies must be great — hey, Beauclerc?"

Beauclerc vouchsafed only a faint, absent smile, and, turning to his guardian, asked — "Since Lord Beltravers was not to be allowed the honours of enemies, or the benefit of pleading prejudice, on what *did* the General form his judgment?"

"From his own words."

"Stay judgment, my dear General," cried Beauclerc; "words repeated! by whom?"

"Repeated by no one — heard from himself by myself."

"Yourself! I was not aware you had ever met; — when? where?" Beauclerc started forward on his chair, and listened eagerly for the answer.

"Pity!" said Lady Davenant, speaking to herself — "pity! that 'with such quick affections kindling into flame,' they should burn to waste."

"When, where?" repeated Beauclerc, with

his eyes fixed on his guardian, and his soul in his eyes.

Soberly and slowly his guardian answered, and categorically, — "When did I meet Lord Beltravers? A short time before his father's death.—Where? At Lady Grace Bland's."

"At Lady Grace Bland's!—where he could not possibly appear to advantage! Well, go on, sir."

"One moment —pardon me, Beauclerc; I have curiosity as well as yourself. May I ask why Lord Beltravers could not possibly have appeared to advantage at Lady Grace Bland's?"

"Because I know he cannot endure her; I have heard him, speaking of her, quote what Johnson or somebody says of Clarissa — 'a prating, preaching, frail creature."

"Good!" said the General, "he said this of his own aunt!"

"Aunt! You cannot mean that Lady Grace is his aunt?" cried Beauclerc.

"She is his mother's sister," replied the General, "and therefore is, I conceive, his aunt."

"Be it so," cried Beauclerc; "people must tell the truth sometimes, even of their own re-

lations; they must know it best, and therefore I conclude that what Beltravers said of Lady Grace is true."

"Bravo! well jumped to a conclusion, Granville, as usual," said Lady Davenant. "But go on, General, tell us what you have heard from this precious Lord; can you have better than what Beauclerc, his own witness, gives in evidence?"

"Better I think, and in the same line," said the General; "his Lordship has the merit of consistency. At table, servants of course present, and myself a stranger, I heard Lord Beltravers begin by cursing England and all that inhabit it. "But your country!" remonstrated his aunt. He abjured England; he had no country, he said, no liberal man ever has; he had no relations — what nature gave him without his consent he had a right to disclaim, I think he argued. But I can swear to these words, with which he concluded — 'My father is an idiot, my mother a brute, and my sister may go to the devil her own way.'"

"Such bad taste!" said the aide-de-camp.

Lady Davenant smiled at the unspeakable

astonishment in Helen's face. "When you have lived one season in the world, my dear child, this power of surprise will be worn out."

"But even to those who have seen the world," said the aide-de-camp, who had seen the world, "as it strikes me, really it is such extraordinary bad taste!"

"Such ordinary bad taste! as it strikes me," said Lady Davenant; "base imitation, and imitation is always a confession of poverty, a want of original genius. But then there are degrees among the race of imitators. Some choose their originals well, some come near them tolerably; but here, all seems equally bad, clumsy, Birmingham counterfeit; don't you think so, Beauclerc? a counterfeit that falls and makes no noise. There is the worst of it for your protegé, whose great ambition I am sure it is to make a noise in the world. However, I may spare my remonstrances, for I am quite aware that you would never let drop a friend."

"Never, never!" cried Beauclerc.

"Then, my dear Granville, do not take up this man, this Lord Beltravers, for, depend

upon it, he will never do. If he had made a bold stroke for a reputation, like a great original, and sported some deed without a name, to work upon the wonder-loving imagination of the credulous English public, one might have thought something of him. But this cowardly, negative sin, *not* honouring his father and mother! so common-place too, neutral tint—no effect. Quite a failure, one cannot even stare, and you know, Granville, the object of all these strange speeches is merely to make fools stare. To be the wonder of the London world for a single day, is the great ambition of these ephemeral fame-hunters, 'insects that shine, buz, and fly-blow in the setting sun.'"

Beauclerc pushed away his tea-cup half across the table, exclaiming, "How unjust! to class him among a tribe he detests and despises as much as you can, Lady Davenant. And all for that one unfortunate speech—Not quite fair, General, not quite philosophical, Lady Davenant, to decide on a man's character from the specimen of a single speech: this is much like judging of a house from the sample

of a single brick. All this time I know how Beltravers came to make that speech — I know how it was, as well as if I had been present — better!"

"Better!" cried Lady Cecilia.

"Ladies and gentlemen may laugh," resumed Beauclerc, "but I seriously maintain —better!"

"How better than the General, who was present, and heard and saw the whole?" said Lady Cecilia.

"Yes, better, for he saw only effects, and I know causes; and I appeal to Lady Davenant, —from Lady Davenant sarcastic to Lady Davenant philosophic I appeal—may not the man who discovers causes, say he knows more than he who merely sees effects?"

"He may say he knows more, at all events," replied Lady Davenant; "but now for the discovery of causes, metaphysical Sir."

"I have done," cried the General, turning to leave the breakfast-room; "when Beauclerc goes to metaphysics I give it up."

"No, no, do not give it up, my dear General," cried Lady Cecilia; "do not stir till we

have heard what will come next, for I am sure it will be something delightfully absurd."

Beauclerc bowed, and feared he should not justify her Ladyship's good opinion, for he had nothing delightfully absurd to say, adding that the cause of his friend's appearing like a brute was, that he feared to be a hypocrite among hypocrites.

"Lord Beltravers was in company with a set who were striving, with all their might of dissimulation, to appear better than they are, and he, as he always does, strove to make himself appear worse than he really is."

"Unnecessary, I should think," said Lady Davenant.

"Impossible, I should think," said the General.

"Impossible I know it is to change your opinion, General, of any one," said Beauclerc.

"For my own part, I am glad of that," said Lady Cecilia, rising; "and I advise you, Granville, to rest content with the General's opinion of yourself, and say no more."

"But," said Beauclerc; "one cannot be content to think only of one's-self always."

"Say no more, say no more," repeated Lady

Cecilia, smiling as she looked back from the door, where she had stopped the General. "For my sake say no more, I entreat, I do dislike to hear so much said about anything or anybody. What sort of a road is it to Old Forest?" continued she; "why should not we ladies go with you, my dear Clarendon, to enliven the way?"

Clarendon's countenance brightened at this proposal. The road was certainly beautiful, he said, by the banks of the Thames. Lady Cecilia and the General left the room, but Beauclerc remained sitting at the breakfast-table, apparently intently occupied in forming a tripod of three tea-spoons; Lady Davenant opposite to him, looking at him earnestly, "Granville!" said she. He started, "Granville! set my mind at ease by one word, tell me the *mot d'énigme* of this sudden friendship."

"Not what you suppose," said he steadily, yet colouring deeply. "The fact is, that Beltravers and I were school-fellows; a generous little fellow he was as ever was born; he got me out of a sad scrape once at his own expense, and I can never forget it. We had never met since we left Eton, till about three weeks ago in

town, when I found him in great difficulties, persecuted, too, by a party — I could not turn my back on him — I would rather be shot!"

"No immediate necessity for being shot, my dear Granville, I hope," said Lady Davenant. "But if this be indeed *all*, I will never say another word against your Lord Beltravers; I will leave it to you to find out his character, or to time to shew it. I shall be quite satisfied that you throw away your money, if it be only money that is in question; be this Lord Beltravers what he may. Let him say, 'or let them do, it is all one to me,' provided that he does not marry you to his sister."

"He has not a thought of it," cried Beauclerc; "and if he had, do you conceive, Lady Davenant, that any man on earth could dispose of me in marriage, at his pleasure?"

"I hope not," said Lady Davenant.

"Be assured not; my own will, my own heart alone, must decide that matter."

"The horses are at the door!" cried Cecilia, as she entered; "but where 's Helen?"

Helen had made her escape out of the room when Lady Davenant had pronounced the

words, "Set my mind at rest, Granville," as she felt it must then be embarrassing to him to speak, and to herself to hear. Her retreat had not, however, been effected without considerable loss, she had been compelled to leave a large piece of the crape trimming of her gown under the foot of Lady Davenant's inexorable chair.

"Here is something that belongs to Miss Stanley, if I mistake not," said the General, who first spied the fragment. The aide-de-camp stooped for it—Lady Cecilia pitied it—Lady Davenant pronounced it to be Helen's own fault—Beauclerc understood how it happened, and said nothing. "But, Helen," cried Lady Cecilia, as she re-appeared,—"but, Helen, are you not coming with us?"

Helen had intended to have gone in the pony-carriage with Lady Davenant, but her ladyship now declared that she had business to do at home; it was settled therefore that Helen was to be of the riding party, and that party consisted of Lady Cecilia and the General, Beauclerc and herself.

## CHAPTER X.

It was a delightful day, sun shining, not too hot, air balmy, birds singing, all nature gay; and the happy influence was quickly felt by the riding party. Unpleasant thoughts of the past or the future, if any such had been, were now lost in present enjoyment. The General, twice a man on horseback, as he always felt himself, managed his own and Helen's horse to admiration, and Cecilia, riding on with Beauclerc, was well pleased to hear his first observation, that he had been quite wrong last night, in not acknowledging that Miss Stanley was beautiful. "People look so different by daylight and by candlelight," said he; "and so different when one does not know them at all, and when one begins to know something of them."

"But what can you know yet of Helen?"

"One forms some idea of character from trifles light as air. How delightful this day is!"

"And now you really allow she may be called beautiful?"

"Yes, that is, with some expression of mind, heart, soul, which is what I look for in general," said Beauclerc.

"In general, what can you mean by in general?"

"Not in particular; in particular cases I might think—I might feel—otherwise."

"In particular, then, do you like fools that have no mind, heart, or soul, Granville?—Answer me."

"Take care," said he, "that horse is too spirited for a lady."

"Not for me," said Lady Cecilia; "but do not think you shall get off so; what did you mean?"

"My meaning lies too deep for the present occasion."

"For the present company—eh?"

Beauclerc half smiled and answered—"You know you used to tell me that you hated long discussions on words, and nice distinctions."

"Well, well, but let me have the nice distinction now."

"Between love and friendship, then, there is a vast difference in what one wishes for in a woman's face; there are 'faces which pale passion loves.'"

"To the right, turn," the General's voice far behind was heard to say.

To the right they turned, into a glade of the park, which opened to a favourite view of the General's, to which Cecilia knew that all attention must be paid. He came up, and they proceeded through a wood which had been planted by his father, not one tree of which had ever been touched by sacrilegious axe. The road led them next into a village, one of the prettiest of that sort of scattered English villages where each habitation seems to have been suited to the fancy as well as to the convenience of each proprietor; giving an idea at once of comfort and liberty, such as can be seen only in England. Happy England, how blest, would she but know her bliss!

This village was inhabited by the General's

tenants. His countenance brightened and expanded, as did theirs, whenever he came amongst them; he saw them happy, and they knew that they owed their happiness in just proportion to their landlord and themselves; therefore, there was a comfortable mixture in their feelings of gratitude and self-respect. Some old people, who were sitting on the stone benches, sunning themselves at their doors, rose as he passed, cap in hand, with cordial greeting. The oldest man, the father of the village, forgot his crutch as he came forward to see his landlord's bride, and to give him joy. At every house where they stopped, out came husband, wife, and children, even "wee toddling things;" one of these, while the General was speaking to its mother, made its way frightfully close to his horse's heels: Helen saw it, and called to the mother. The General, turning and leaning back on his horse, said to the bold little urchin as the mother snatched him up, "My boy, as long as you live never again go behind a horse's heels."

"And remember, it was General Clarendon

gave you this advice," added Beauclerc, and turning to Lady Cecilia—" '*Et souvenez vous que c'est Marechal Turenne qui vous l'a dit.*' "

While the General searched for that English memento, sixpence, Lady Cecilia repeated, " Marshal Turenne ! I do not understand."

" Yes, ifyou recollect," said Helen, " you do."

" I dare say I know, but I don't remember," said Cecilia.

" It was only," said Helen, " that the same thing had happened to Marshal Turenne, that he gave the same advice to a little child."

Lady Cecilia said she owed Beauclerc an acknowledgment down to her saddle-bow, for the compliment to her General, and a bow at least as low to Helen, for making her comprehend it ; and, having paid both debts with graceful promptitude, she observed, in an aside to Beauclerc, that she quite agreed with him, that " In friendship it was good not to have to do with fools."

He smiled.

" It is always permitted," continued Cecilia, " to woman to use her intellects so far as to comprehend what man says ; her knowledge, of

whatever sort, never comes amiss when it serves only to illustrate what is said by one of the lords of the creation. Let us note this, my dear Helen, as a general maxim, for future use, and pray, since you have so good a memory, remember to tell mamma, who says I never generalise, that this morning I have actually made and established a philosophical maxim, one that may be of some use too, which cannot be said of all reflections, general or particular."

They rode on through a lane fragrant with primroses, mingled with violets, white and blue, in gay profusion, and this lane led gently down to the banks of the Thames—those beautiful banks! The road now continued along the river side, where the black steam-boat never marked the way; where yet you breathe Nature's fresh air unpolluted by smell or smoke; where yet the busy hum of men, the din of commerce, prevail not; but where the river flows on, and seems as if it would for ever flow in full broad placid silence and dignity: nor ship, nor boat, was to be seen, save one pleasure-skiff skimming along over the light-

streaked water, the "silvery Thames," here no unmeaning epithet, but the just distinction of that smooth mirror, reflecting every object on its banks—its banks, not here, as Beauclerc pointed out, crowded with citizen's boxes, or gay with merely pretty villas, but spreading into parks of vast extent, woods towering above and beyond, and below, in gentle sweeps feathering down to the water's edge, some just tinged with early green, some in the full foliage of advancing spring. The General, less poetically inclined, would name to Helen all the fine places within view—"residences," as he practically remarked—"such as cannot be seen in any country in the world but England; and not only fine places such as these, but from the cottage to the palace—'the homes of Old England' are the best homes upon earth."

"The most candid and sensible of all modern French travellers," said Beauclerc, "was particularly struck with the superiority of our English country residences, and the comfort of our homes."

"You mean Madame de Staël?" said the General; "true English sense in that book, I allow."

When the General and Beauclerc did agree in opinion about a book, which was not a circumstance of frequent occurrence, they were mutually delighted; one always feeling the value of the other's practical sense, and the other then acknowledging that literature is good for something. Beauclerc, in the fulness of his heart, and abundance of his words, began to expatiate on Madame de Staël's merits, in having better than any foreigner understood the actual workings and balances of the British constitution, that constitution so much talked of abroad, and so little understood."

"So little understood anywhere," said the General.

Reasonably as Beauclerc now spoke, Helen formed a new idea of his capacity, and began to think more respectfully even of his common sense, than when she had heard him in the Beltravers cause. He spoke of the causes of England's prosperity, the means by which she maintains her superiority among nations—her equal laws and their just administration. He observed, that the hope which every man born in England, even in the lowest station, may

have of rising by his own merits to the highest eminence, forms the great spring of industry and talent. He agreed with the intelligent foreigner's observation, that the aristocracy of talent is superior in England to the aristocracy of birth.

The General seemed to demur at the word superior, drew himself up, but said nothing in contradiction.

"Industry, and wealth, and education, and fashion, all emulous, act in England beneficially on each other," continued Beauclerc.

The General sat at ease again.

"And above all," pursued Beauclerc,—"above all, education and the diffusion of knowledge——"

"Knowledge—yes, but take care of what kind," said his guardian.

"All kinds are good," said Beauclerc.

"No, only such as are safe," said the General. The march of intellect was not a favourite march with him, unless the step were perfectly kept, and all in good time.

But now, on passing a projecting bend in the wood, they came within sight of a place in

melancholy contrast to all they had just admired. A park of considerable extent, absolutely bereft of trees, except a few ragged firs on each side of a large dilapidated mansion, on the summit of a bleak hill; it seemed as if a great wood had once been there.

"Old Forest!" exclaimed the General; "Old Forest, now no more! Many a happy hour, when I was a boy, have I spent shooting in those woods," and he pointed to where innumerable stumps of trees, far as the eye could reach, marked where the forest had once stood: some of the white circles on the ground shewed the magnificent size of those newly felled. Beauclerc was quite silent.

The General led the way on to the great gate of entrance: the porter's lodge was in ruins.

A huge rusty padlock hung upon one of the gates, which had been dragged half open, but, the hinge having sunk, there it stuck—the gate could not be opened further. The upper hinge of the other was broken, so that the gate had fallen forward, and could not be stirred without imminent hazard of bringing down the

pier, which was so crazy, the groom said, "he was afraid, if he shook it never so little, all would come down together."

"Let it alone," said the General, in a tone resolved to be patient; "there is room enough for us to get in one by one—Miss Stanley, do not be in a hurry, if you please; follow me quietly."

In they filed. The avenue, overgrown with grass, would have been difficult to find, but for deep old cart-ruts which still marked the way. But soon, fallen trees, and lopped branches, dragged many a rood and then left there, made it difficult to pass. And there lay exposed the white bodies of many a noble tree, some wholly, some half, stripped of their bark, some green in decay, left to the weather—and every here and there little smoking pyramids of burning charcoal.

As they approached the house—"How changed," said the General, "from that once cheerful hospitable mansion!"—It was a melancholy example of a deserted home: the rough-cast off, the cut stone green, the windows broken, the shutters half shut, the way to the hall-door steps blocked up. They were forced to

go round through the yards. Coach-houses and stables, grand ranges, now all dilapidated. Only one yelping cur in the great kennel. The back-door being ajar, the General pushed it open, and they went in, and on to the great kitchen, where they found in the midst of wood smoke one little old woman, whom they nearly scared out of her remaining senses. She stood and stared. Beauclerc stepped towards her to explain; but she was deaf: he raised his voice—in vain. She was made to comprehend by the General, whose voice, known in former times, reached her heart—"that they only came to see the place."

"See the place! ah! a sad sight to see." Her eyes reverted to Beauclerc, and, conceiving that he was the young lord himself, she waxed pale, and her head shook fearfully; but, when relieved from this mistake, she went forward to shew them over the house.

As they proceeded up the great staircase, she confided to her friend, the General, that she was glad it was not the young lord, for she was told he was a fiery man, and she dreaded his coming unawares.

Lady Cecilia asked if she did not know him?

No, she had never seen him since he was a little fellow; "he has been always roaming about, like the rest, in foreign parts, and has never set foot in the place since he came to man's estate."

As the General passed a window on the landing-place, he looked out.—"You are missing the great elm, Sir. Ah! I remember you here, a boy; you was always good. It was the young lord ordered specially the cutting of that, which I could not stomach; the last of the real old trees! Well, well! I 'm old and foolish—I 'm old and foolish, and I should not talk."

But still she talked on, and as this seemed her only comfort, they would not check her garrulity. In the hope that they were come to take the house, she now bustled as well as she could, to shew all to the best advantage, but bad was the best now, as she sorrowfully said. She was very unwilling that the gentlemen should go up to inspect the roof. They went, however; and the General saw and estimated, and Beauclerc saw and hoped.

The General, recollecting the geography of the house, observed that she had not shewn them what used to be the picture-gallery, which looked out on the terrace; he desired to see it. She reluctantly obeyed, and, after trying sundry impossible keys, repeating all the while that her heart was broke, that she wished it had pleased God never to give her a heart, unlock the door she could not in her trepidation. Beauclerc gently took the keys from her, and looked so compassionately upon her, that she God-blessed him, and thought it a pity her young lord was not like him; and while he dealt with the lock, Lady Cecilia, saying they would trouble her no further, slipped into her hand what she thought would be some comfort. The poor old creature thanked her ladyship, but said gold could be of no use to her now in life; she should soon let the parish bury her, and be no cost to the young lord. She could forgive many things, she said, but she could never forgive him for parting with the old pictures. She turned away as the gallery-door opened.

One only old daub of a grandmother was

there; all the rest had been sold, and their vacant places remained discoloured on the walls. There were two or three dismembered old chairs, the richly dight windows broken, the floor rat-eaten. The General stood and looked, and did not sigh, but absolutely groaned. They went to the shattered glass door, which looked out upon the terrace—that terrace which had cost thousands of pounds to raise, and he called Cecilia to shew her the place where the youngsters used to play, and to point out some of his favourite haunts.

"It is most melancholy to see a family-place so gone to ruin," said Beauclerc; "if it strikes us so much, what must it be to the son of this family, to come back to the house of his ancestors, and find it thus desolate! Poor Beltravers!"

The expression of the General's eye changed.

"I am sure you must pity him, my dear General," continued Beauclerc.

"I might, had he done any thing to prevent, or had he done less to hasten, this ruin."

"How? he should not have cut down the trees, do you mean?—but it was to pay his father's debts——"

"And his own," said the General.

"He told me his father's, sir."

"And I tell you his own."

"Even so," said Beauclerc, "debts are not crimes for which we ought to shut the gates of mercy on our fellow-creatures—and so young a man as Beltravers, left to himself, without a home, his family abroad, no parent, no friend —no guardian friend."

"But what is it you would do, Beauclerc?" said the General.

"What you must wish to be done," said Beauclerc. "Repair this ruin, restore this once hospitable mansion, and put it in the power of the son to be what his ancestors have been."

"But how— my dear Beauclerc? Tell me plainly—how?

"Plainly, I would lend him money enough to make this house fit to live in."

"And he would never repay you, and would never live in it."

"He would, sir—he promised me he would."

"Promised you!"

"And I promised him that I would lend him the money."

"Promised! Beauclerc? Without your guardian's knowledge? Pray, how much——"

"Confound me, if I remember the words. The sense was, what would do the business; what would make the house fit for him and his sisters to live in."

"Ten thousand!—fifteen thousand would not do."

"Well, sir. You know what will be necessary better than I do. A few thousands more or less, what signifies, provided a friend be well served. The superfluous money accumulated during my long minority cannot be better employed."

"All that I have been saving for you with such care from the time your father died!"

"My dear guardian, my dear friend, do not think me ungrateful; but the fact is,—in short, my happiness does not depend, never can depend, upon money; as my friend, therefore, I beseech you to consider my moneyed interest less and my happiness more."

"Beauclerc, you do not know what your happiness is. One hour you tell me it is one thing, the next another. What is become of

the plan for the new house you wanted to build for yourself? I must have common sense for you, Beauclerc, as you have none for yourself. I shall not give you this money for Lord Beltravers."

"You forget, sir, that I told you I had promised."

"You forget, Beauclerc, that I told you that such a promise, vague and absurd in itself, made without your guardian's concurrence or consent, is absolutely null and void."

"Null and void in law, perhaps, it may be," cried Beauclerc; "but, for that very reason, in honour, the stronger, the more binding, and I am speaking to a man of honour"

"To one who can take care of his own honour," said the General.

"And of mine, I trust."

"You do well to trust it, as your father did, to me; it shall not be implicated——"

"When once I am of age," interrupted Beauclerc.

"You will do as you please," said the General. "In the mean time I shall do my duty."

"But, sir, I only ask you to let me *lend* this money."

"Lend—nonsense! lend to a man who cannot give any security."

"Security!" said Beauclerc, with a look of unutterable contempt. "When a friend is in distress, to talk to him, like an attorney, of security! Do, pray, sir, spare me that. I would rather give the money at once."

"I make no doubt of it; then at once I say no, sir."

"No, sir! and why do you say no?"

"Because I think it my duty, and nothing I have heard has at all shaken my opinion."

"Opinion! and so I am to be put down by opinion, without any reason!" cried Beauclerc. Then trying to command his temper, "But tell me, my dear General, why I cannot have this cursed money?"

"Because, my dear Beauclerc, I am your guardian, and can say *no*, and can adhere to a refusal as firmly as any man living, when it is necessary."

"Yes, and when it is unnecessary. General Clarendon, according to your own estimate, fif-

teen thousand pounds is the utmost sum requisite to put this house in a habitable state—by that sum I abide."

"Abide!"

"Yes, I require it, to keep my promise to Beltravers, and have it I MUST."

"Not from me."

"From some one else then, for have it I WILL."

"Dearest Clarendon," whispered Lady Cecilia, "let him have it, since he has promised—"

Without seeming to hear her whisper, without a muscle of his countenance altering, General Clarendon repeated, "Not from me."

"From some one else then—I can."

"Not while I have power to prevent."

"Power! power! power! Yes, that is what you love, above all things and all persons, and I tell you plainly, General Clarendon," pursued Beauclerc, too angry to heed or see Lady Cecilia's remonstrating looks, "at once I tell you that you have not the power. You had it. It is past and gone. The power of affection you had, if not of reason; but force, General Clarendon, despotism, can never govern me. I

submit to no man's mere will, much less to any man's sheer obstinacy."

At the word obstinacy, the General's face, which was before rigid, grew hard as iron. Beauclerc walked up and down the room with great strides, and as he strode he went on talking to himself.

"To be kept from the use of my own money, treated like a child—an idiot—at my time of life! Not considered at years of discretion, when other men of the meanest capacity, by the law of the land, can do what they please with their own property! By heavens!—that will of my father's——"

"Should be respected, my dear Granville, since it was your father's will," said Lady Cecilia, joining him as he walked. "And respect——" He stopped short.

"My dear Lady Cecilia, for your sake——" he tried to restrain himself.

"Till this moment never did I say one disrespectful word to General Clarendon. I always considered him as the representative of my father; and when most galled I have borne the chains in which it was my father's pleasure

to leave me. Few men of my age would have so submitted to a guardian not many years older than himself."

"Yes, and indeed that should be considered," said Lady Cecilia, turning to the General.

"I have always considered General Clarendon more as my friend than my guardian."

"And have found him so, I had hoped," said the General, relaxing in tone but not in looks.

"I have never treated you, sir, as some wards treat their guardians. I have dealt openly, as man of honour to man of honour. gentleman to gentleman, friend to friend."

"Acknowledged, and felt by me, Beauclerc."

"Then now, my dear Clarendon, grant the only request of any consequence I ever made you—say yes." Beauclerc trembled with impatience.

"No," said the General. "I have said it—No."

The gallery rung with the sound.

"No!" repeated Beauclerc.

Each walked separately up and down the room, speaking, without listening to what the

other said. Helen heard an offer from Beauclerc, to which she extremely wished that the General had listened. But he was deaf with determination not to yield to anything Beauclerc could say further; the noise of passion in their ears was too great for either of them to hear the other.

Suddenly turning, Beauclerc exclaimed,

"Borne with me, do you say? 'Tis I that have to bear—and by heavens!" cried he, "more than I can—than I will—bear. Before to-morrow's sun goes down I will have the money."

"From whom?"

"From any money-lending Jew—usurer—extortioner—cheat—rascal—whatever he be. You drive me to it—you—you my friend—you, with whom I have dealt so openly; and to the last it shall be open. To no vile indirections will I stoop. I tell you, my guardian, that if you deny me my own, I will have what I want from the Jews."

"Easily," said his guardian. "But first, recollect that a clause in your father's will, in such case, sends his estates to your cousin Venables."

"To my cousin Venables let them go—all—all; if such be your pleasure, sir, be it so. The lowest man on earth that has feeling keeps his promise. The slave has a right to his word! Ruin me if you will, and as soon as you please; disgrace me you cannot; bend my spirit you cannot; ruin in any shape I will meet, rather than submit to such a guardian, such a——"

Tyrant— he was on the point of saying, but Lady Cecilia stopped that word by suddenly seizing upon his arm: forcibly she carried him off, saying, "Come out with me on the terrace, Granville, and recover your senses."

"My senses! I have never lost them; never was cooler in my life," said he, kicking open the glass door upon its first resistance, and shattering its remaining panes to fragments. Unnoticing, not hearing the crash, the General stood leaning his elbow on the mantel-piece, and covering his eyes with his hand. Helen remained near him, scarce breathing loud enough to be heard; he did not know she was there, and he repeated aloud, in an accent of deep feeling, "Tyrant! from Beauclerc!"

A sigh from Helen made him aware of her

presence, and, as he removed his hand from his eyes, she saw his look was more in sorrow than in anger: she said softly, "Mr. Beauclerc was wrong, very wrong, but he was in a passion, he did not know what he meant."

There was silence for a few moments. "You are right, I believe," said the General, "it was heat of anger—"

"To which the best are subject," said Helen, "and the best and kindest most easily forgive."

"But Beauclerc said some things which were——"

"Unpardonable—only forget them; let all be forgotten."

"Yes," said the General, "all but my determination; that, observe, is fixed. My mind, Miss Stanley, is made up, and, once made up, it is not to be changed."

"I am certain of that," said Helen, "but I am not clear that your mind is made up."

The General looked at her with astonishment.

"Your refusal is not irrevocable."

"You do not know me, Miss Stanley."

"I think I do."

"Better than I know myself?"

"Yes, better, if you do yourself the injustice to think that you would not yield, if it were right to do so. At this very instant," pursued Helen, disregarding his increasing astonishment, "you would yield if you could reasonably, honourably—would not you? If you could without injury to your ward's fortune or character, would you not? Surely it is for his good only that you are so resolute?"

"Certainly!" He waited with eyes fixed, bending forward, but with intensity of purpose in his calmness of attention.

"There was something which I heard Mr. Beauclerc say, which, I think, escaped your attention," said Helen. "When you spoke of the new house he intended to build for himself, which was to cost so much, he offered to give that up."

"I never heard that offer."

"I heard him," said Helen, "I assure you: it was when you were both walking up and down the room."

"This may be so, I was angry *then*," said the General.

"But you are not angry now," said Helen.

He smiled, and in truth he desired nothing more than an honourable loophole—a safe way of coming off without injury to his ward—without hurting his own pride, or derogating from the dignity of guardian. Helen saw this, and, thanking him for his condescension, his kindness, in listening to her, she hastened as quickly as possible, lest the relenting moment might not be seized; and, running out on the terrace, she saw Beauclerc, his head down upon his arms, leaning upon an old broken stone lion, and Lady Cecilia standing beside him, commiserating: and as she approached, she heard her persuading him to go to the General, and speak to him again, and say *so*—only say so.

Whatever it was, Helen did not stay to inquire, but told Cecilia, in as few words as she could, all that she had to say; and ended with "Was I right?"

"Quite right, was not she, Granville?"

Beauclerc looked up—A gleam of hope and joy came across his face, and, with one grateful look to Helen, he darted forward. They followed, but could not keep pace with

him; and when they reached the gallery, they found him appealing, as to a father, for pardon.

"Can you forgive, and will you?"

"Forgive my not hearing you, not listening to you, as your father would? My dear Beauclerc, you were too hot, and I was too cold; and there is an end of it."

This reconciliation was as quick, as warm, as the quarrel had been. And then explanations were made, as satisfactorily as they are when the parties are of good understanding, and depend on each other's truth, past, present, and future.

Beauclerc, whose promise all relied on, and for reasons good, none more implicitly than the General, promised that he would ask for no more than just what would do to put this Old Forest house in habitable trim; he said he would give up the new house for himself, till as many thousands as he now lent, spent, or wasted—take which word you will—should be again accumulated from his income. It was merely a sacrifice of his own vanity, and perhaps a little of his own comfort, he said, to save a friend, a human being, from destruction.

"Well, well, let it rest so."

It was all settled, witness present — "two angels to witness," as Beauclerc quoted from some old play.

And now in high good-humour, up again to nonsense pitch, they all felt that delightful relief of spirits, of which friends, after perilous quarrel, are sensible in perfect reconciliation. They left this melancholy mansion now, with Beauclerc the happiest of the happy, in the generous hope that he should be the restorer of its ancient glories and comfort. The poor old woman was not forgotten as they passed, she curtseying, hoping, and fearing: Lady Cecilia whispered, and the deaf ear heard,

"The roof will not fall — all will be well: and there is the man will do it all."

"Well, well, my heart inclined to him from the first — at least from the minute I knew him not to be my young lord."

They were to go home by water. The boat was in readiness, and, as Beauclerc carefully handed Helen into it, the General said:— "Yes, you are right to take care of Miss Stan-

ley, Beauclerc; she is a good friend in need, at least, as I have found this morning," added he, as he seated himself beside her.

Lady Cecilia was charming, and everything was delightful, especially the cold chicken.

## CHAPTER XI.

No two people could be more unlike in their habits of mind than this guardian and ward. General Clarendon referred in all cases to old experience, and dreaded innovation; Beauclerc took for his motto, "My mind leadeth me to new things." General Clarendon was what is commonly called a practical man; Granville Beauclerc was the flower of theorists. The General, fit for action, prompt and decided in all his judgments, was usually right and just in his conclusions—but if wrong, there was no setting him right; for he not only would not, but could not, go back over the ground — he could not give in words any explanation of his process of reasoning—it was enough for him that it was right, and that it was *his;* while Beauclerc, who cared not for any man's opinion, was always so ingeniously wrong, and could shew

all the steps of his reasoning so plausibly, that it was a pity he should be quite out of the right road at last. The General hated metaphysics, because he considered them as taking a flight beyond the reach of discipline, as well as of common sense; he continually asked, of what use are they?—While Lady Davenant answered:

"To invigorate and embellish the understanding. 'This turning the soul inward on itself concentrates its forces, and fits it for the strongest and boldest flights: and in such pursuits, whether we take or whether we lose the game, the chace is certainly of service.'"

Possibly, the General said; he would not dispute the point with Lady Davenant, but a losing chace, however invigorating, was one in which he never wished to engage: as to the rest, he altogether hated discussions, doubts, and questionings. He had "made up his faggot of opinions," and would not let one be drawn out for examination, lest he should loosen the bundle.

Beauclerc, on the contrary, had his dragged out and scattered about every day, and each particular stick was tried, and bent, and twisted, this way and that, and peeled, and cut, and

hacked, and unless they proved sound to the very core, not a twig of them should ever go back into his bundle, which was to be the bundle of bundles, the best that ever was seen, when once tied so that it would hold together—of which there seemed little likelihood, as every knot slipped, and all fell to pieces at each pull.

While he was engaged in this analysis, he was, as his guardian thought, in great moral peril, for not a principle had he left to bless himself with; and, in any emergency, if any temptation should occur, what was to become of him? The General, who was very fond of him, but also strongly attached to his own undeviating rule of right, was upon one occasion about peremptorily to interpose, not only with remonstrances as a friend, but with authority as a guardian.

This occurred when Beauclerc was with them at Florence, and when the General's love for Lady Cecilia, and intimacy with her mother, commenced. Lady Davenant, being much interested for young Beauclerc, begged that the patient might be left to her, and that his guardian would refrain from interference. This

was agreed to the more readily by the General, as his thoughts and feelings were then more agreeably engrossed, and Beauclerc found in Lady Davenant the very friend he wanted and wished for most ardently — one whose mind would not blench at any moral danger, would never shrink from truth in any shape, but, calm and self-possessed, would examine whether it were indeed truth, or only a phantom assuming her form. Besides, there was in Lady Davenant towards Beauclerc a sort of maternal solicitude and kindness, of which the effect was heightened by her dignified manner and pride of character. She, in the first place, listened to him patiently; she, who could talk, would listen: this was, as she said, her first merit in his estimation. To her he poured forth all those doubts, of which she was wise enough not to make crimes: she was sure of his honourable intentions, certain that there was no underhand motive, no bad passion, no concealed vice, or disposition to vice, beneath his boasted freedom from prejudice, to be justified or to be indulged by getting rid of the restraints of principle. Had there been any danger of this

sort, which with young men who profess themselves *ultra-liberal* is usually the case, she would have joined in his guardian's apprehensions; but in fact Beauclerc, instead of being "le philosophe sans le savoir," was "le bon enfant sans le savoir;" for, while he questioned the rule of right in all his principles, and while they were held in abeyance, his good habits and good natural disposition held fast and stood him in stead; while Lady Davenant, by slow degrees, brought him to define his terms, and presently to see that he had been merely saying old things in new words, and that the systems which had dazzled him as novelties were old to older eyes; in short, that he was merely a resurrectionist of obsolete heresies, which had been gone over and over again at various long-past periods, and over and over again abandoned by the common sense of mankind: so that, after puzzling and wandering a weary way in the dark labyrinth he had most ingeniously made for himself, he saw light, followed it, and at length making his way out, was surprised, and sorry perhaps to perceive that it was the common light of day.

It is of great consequence to young enthusiastic tyros, like Beauclerc, to have safe friends to whom they can talk of their opinions privately, otherwise they will talk their ingenious nonsense publicly, and so they bind themselves, or are bound, to the stake, and live or die martyrs to their own follies.

From these and all such dangers Lady Davenant protected him, and she took care that nobody hurt him in his defenceless state, before his shell was well-formed and hardened. She was further of peculiar service in keeping all safe and smooth between the ward and guardian. All Beauclerc's romance the General would have called by the German word "*Schwarmerei*" — not fudge — not humbug — literally "sky-rocketing" — visionary enthusiasm; and when it came to arguments, they might have turned to quarrels, but for Lady Davenant's superior influence, while Lady Cecilia's gentleness and gaiety usually succeeded in putting all serious dangerous thoughts to flight.

Nature never having intended Lady Cecilia for a manœuvrer, she was now perpetually on the point of betraying herself; and one day,

when she was alone with Helen, she exclaimed, "Never was any thing better managed than I managed this, my dear Helen! I am so glad I told you——" Recollecting herself just in time, she ended with, "so glad I told you the truth."

"Oh yes! thank you," said Helen. "My uncle used to say no one could be a good friend who does not tell the whole truth."

"That I deny," thought Cecilia. The twinge of conscience was felt but very slightly; not visible in any change of countenance, except by a quick twinkling motion of the eyelashes, not noticed by unsuspicious Helen.

Everything now went on as happily as Cecilia could have desired; every morning they rode or boated to Old Forest, to see what was doing. The roof was rather hastily taken off; Lady Cecilia hurried forward that measure, aware that without the roof there would be no possibility that any of the ladies of the family could for some time, think of coming there. To gain victory by delay was all she wanted, and she would now, as she promised herself, leave the rest to time. She would

never interfere further in word or look, especially when her mother might be by. Half this promise she kept faithfully, the other she broke continually.

There were plans to be made of all the alterations and improvements at Old Forest. Beauclerc applied to Lady Cecilia for her advice and assistance. Her advice she gave, but her assistance she ingeniously contrived to leave to Helen, for, whenever Beauclerc brought to her a sketch or a plan of what was to be done, Lady Cecilia immediately gave it to Helen, repeating, " Never drew a regular plan in my life, you know, my dear; you must do this;" so that Helen's pencil and her patience were in constant requisition. Then came apologies from Beauclerc, and regrets at taking up her time, all which led to an intimacy that Lady Cecilia took care to keep up by frequent visits to Old Forest, so that Helen was necessarily joined in all his present pursuits.

During one of these visits, they were looking over some old furniture which Lord Beltravers had commissioned Beauclerc to have disposed of at some neighbouring auction. There was

one curiously carved oak arm-chair, belonging to "the old old gentleman of all," which the old woman particularly regretted should go. She had sewed it up in a carpet, and when it came out, Helen was struck with its likeness to a favourite chair of her uncle's; many painful recollections occurred to her, and tears came into her eyes. Ashamed of what appeared so like affectation, she turned away, that her tears might not be seen, and when Cecilia, following her, insisted on knowing what was the matter, she left Helen immediately to the old woman, and took the opportunity of telling Beauclerc all about Dean Stanley, and how Helen was an heiress and no heiress, and her having determined to give up all her fortune to pay her uncle's debts. There was a guardian, too, in the case, who would not consent; and, in short, a parallelism of circumstances, a similarity of generous temper, and all this she thought must interest Beauclerc—and so it did. But yet its being told to him would have gone against his nice notions of delicacy, and Helen would have been ruined in his opinion had he conceived that it had been revealed to him with her con-

sent or connivance. She came back before Lady Cecilia had quite finished, and a few words which she heard, made her aware of the whole. The blush of astonishment—the glance of indignation—which she gave at Lady Cecilia, settled Beauclerc's opinion; and Cecilia was satisfied that she had done her friend good service against her will, and as to the means thought she—what signifies going back to consider, when they succeed.

The Collingwoods gladly availed themselves of Lady Cecilia Clarendon's kind invitation, as they were both most anxious to take leave of Helen Stanley before their departure. They were to sail very soon, so that their visit was but short; a few days of painful pleasure to Helen—a few days enjoyed, because such kind friends were with her, but enjoyed with the mournful sense that they would end so soon, and for so long a time; perhaps, for ever.

Mr. Collingwood told Helen that if she still agreed to his conditions, he would arrange with Mr. James, the solicitor, that all the money left to her by her uncle should be appropriated to the payment of his debts. "But," con-

tinued he, "pause and consider well, whether you can do without this money, which is still yours; you are, you know, not bound by any promise, and it is not yet too late to say you have altered your decision."

Helen smiled and said, "You cannot be serious in saying this, I am sure?"

Mr. Collingwood assured her that he was. Helen simply said that her determination was unalterable. He looked pleased, yet his last words in taking leave of her were, "Remember, my dear, that when you have given away your fortune, you cannot live as if you had it."

The Collingwoods departed, and, after a decent time had elapsed, or what she deemed a decent time, Lady Cecilia was anxious to ascertain what progress had been made—how, relatively to each other, Lady Blanche Forrester and Helen stood in Beauclerc's opinion, or rather in his imagination. But this was not quite so easy a matter to determine as she had conceived it would be, judging from the frankness of Beauclerc's temper, and from the terms of familiarity on which they had lived

while abroad. His confidence was not to be won, surprised, or forced. He was not only jealous of his free will, as most human beings are in love affairs, but, like all men of true feeling, he desired in these matters perfect mental privacy.

When Psyche is awakened, it should be by Cupid alone. Beauclerc did not yet wish that she should be awakened. He admired, he enjoyed, that repose; he was charmed by the perfect confiding simplicity of Helen's mind, so unlike what he had seen in others—so real. The hope of that pure friendship which dawned upon him he wished to prolong, and dreaded lest, by any doubt raised, all might be clouded and changed. Lady Cecilia was, however, convinced that, without knowing it, he was falling comfortably in love through friendship—a very easy, convenient way.

And Helen, had she too set out upon that easy, convenient road of friendship? She did not think about the road, but she felt that it was very agreeable, and thought it was quite safe, as she went on so smoothly and easily She could not consider Mr. Beauclerc as a new

acquaintance, because she had heard so much about him. He was completely one of the family, so that she, as part of that family, could not treat him as a stranger. Her happiness, she was sensible, had much increased since his arrival; but so had everybody's. He gave a new spring, a new interest, to every thing; added so much to the life of life. His sense and his nonsense were each of them good in their kind; and they were of various kinds, from the high sublime of metaphysics to the droll realities of life. But, everybody blaming, praising, scolding, laughing *at*, or *with* him, he was necessary to all and with all, for some reason or other, a favourite.

But the General was always as impatient as Lady Cecilia herself both of his hypercriticism and of his never-ending fancies, each of which Beauclerc pursued with an eagerness and abandoned with a facility which sorely tried the General's equanimity.

One day, after having ridden to Old Forest, General Clarendon returned chafed. He entered the library, talking to Cecilia, as Helen thought, about his horse.

"No managing him! Curb him ever so little, and he is on his hind-legs directly. Give him his head, put the bridle on his neck, and he stands still; does not know which way he would go, or what he would do. The strangest fellow for a rational creature."

Now it was clear it was of Beauclerc that he spoke. "So rash and yet so resolute," continued the General.

"How is that?" said Lady Davenant.

"I do not know how, but so it is," said the General. "As you know," appealing to Helen and to Lady Cecilia, "he was ready to run me through till he had his own way about that confounded old house; and now there are all the workmen at a stand, because Mr. Beauclerc cannot decide what he will have done or undone."

"Oh, it is my fault!" cried Helen, with the guilty recollection of the last alteration not having been made yesterday in drawing the working plan, and she hastened to look for it directly; but when she found it, she saw to her dismay that Beauclerc had scribbled it all over with literary notes, it was in no state to

meet the General's eye; she set about copying it as fast as possible.

"Yes," pursued the General; "forty alterations—shuffling about continually. Cannot a man be decided?"

"Always with poor Beauclerc," said Lady Cecilia, "le mieux est l'ennemi du bien."

"No, my dear Cecilia, it is all his indolence; there he sat with a book in his hand all yesterday! with all his impetuosity, too indolent to stir in his own business," said the General.

"His mind is too active sometimes to allow his body to stir," said Lady Davenant; "and, because he cannot move the universe, he will not stir his little finger."

"He is very fond of paradoxes, and your ladyship is very fond of him," said the General; "but indolent he is, and as to activity of mind, it is only in pursuit of his own fancies."

"And your fancies and his differ," said Lady Davenant.

"Because he never fancies anything useful," said the General.

"C'est selon! c'est selon!" cried Lady Cecilia gaily; "he thinks his fancies useful, and espe-

cially all he is doing at Old Forest; but I confess he tends most to the agreeable. Certainly he is a most agreeable creature."

"Agreeable! satisfied to be called an agreeable man!" cried the General indignantly; "yes, he has no ambition."

"There I differ from you, General," said Lady Davenant; "he has too much; have patience with him; he is long-sighted in his visions of glory."

"Visions indeed!" said the General.

"Those who are really ambitious," continued Lady Davenant, "must think before they act. 'What shall I do to be for ever known?' is a question which deserves at least a little more thought than those which most young men ask themselves, which commonly are, 'What shall I do to be known to-morrow—on the Turf or at Brooks's—or in Doctors' Commons—or at some exclusive party at charming Lady Nobody's?"

"What will you do for the plan for these workmen in the mean time, my dear Clarendon?" said Lady Cecilia, afraid that some long discussion would ensue.

"Here it is!" said Helen, who had managed to get it ready while they were talking. She gave it to the General, who thanked her, and was off directly. Cecilia then came to divert herself with looking at Beauclerc's scribbled plan, and she read the notes aloud for her mother's amusement. It was a sketch of a dramatical, metaphysical, entertainment, of which half a dozen proposed titles had been scratched out, and there was finally left 'Tarquin the Optimist, or the Temple of Destiny.' It was from an old story begun by Laurentius Valla, and continued by Leibnitz—she read,

"'*Act* i. *Scene* 1. *Sextus Tarquin goes to consult the Oracle, who foretells the crime he is to commit.*'

"And then," cried Lady Cecilia, "come measures of old and new front of Old Forest house, wings included.—Now he goes on with his play.

"'*Tarquin's complaint to Jupiter of the Oracle—Modern Predestination compared to Ancient Destiny.*'

"And here," continued Cecilia, "come prices of Norway deal and a great blot, and then we

have '*Jupiter's answer that Sextus may avoid his doom if he pleases, by staying away from Rome; but he does not please to do so, because he must then renounce the crown. Good speech here on vanity of human wishes — inconsistency of human wishes.*'

" ' Kitchen 23 ft. by 21. Query with hobs?'

" I cannot conceive, my dear Helen," continued Lady Cecilia, " how you could make the drawing out through all this," and she continued to read.

" ' *Scene 3rd.*

" ' *High Priest of Delphi asks Jupiter why he did not give Sextus a better* WILL *?—why not* MAKE *him choose to give up the crown, rather than commit the crime? Jupiter refuses to answer, and sends the High Priest to consult Minerva at Athens.*'

" ' N.B. Old woman at Old Forest, promised her an oven.'—'*Leibnitz gives* ——'

" Oh ! if he goes to Leibnitz," said Lady Cecilia, " he will be too grand for me, but it will do for you, mamma.

" ' *Leibnitz gives in his Temple of the Destinies a representation of every possible universe*

*from the worst to the best—This could not be done on the stage*'

"Very true indeed," said Lady Cecilia, "but Helen, listen, Granville has really found an ingenious resource.

"'*By Ombres Chinoises, suppose; or a gauze curtain, as in Zemire et Azore, the audience might be made to understand the main point, that* GOOD *resulted from Tarquin's* BAD *choice. Brutus, Liberty, Rome's grandeur, and the Optimist right at last. Q.E.D.*'

"Well, well," continued Lady Cecilia, "I don't understand it; but I understand this,—'Bricks wanting.'"

Lady Davenant smiled at this curious specimen of Beauclerc's versatility, but said, "I fear he will fritter away his powers on a hundred different petty objects, and do nothing at last worthy of his abilities. He will scatter and divide the light of his genius, and shew us every change of the prismatic colours — curious and beautiful to behold, but dispersing, wasting the light he should concentrate on some one, some noble object."

"But if he has light enough for little objects

and great too?" said Lady Cecilia, "I allow, 'qu'il faudrait plus d'un cœur pour aimer tant de choses à la fois;' but, as I really think Granville has more heart than is necessary, he can well afford to waste some of it, even on the old woman at Old Forest."

## CHAPTER XII.

ONE evening, Helen was looking over a beautiful scrap-book of Lady Cecilia's. Beauclerc, who had stood by for some time, eyeing it in rather scornful silence, at length asked whether Miss Stanley was a lover of albums and autographs?

Helen had no album of her own, she said, but she was curious always to see the autographs of celebrated people.

"Why?" said Beauclerc.

"I don't know. It seems to bring one nearer to them. It gives more reality to our imagination of them perhaps," said Helen.

"The imagination is probably in most cases better than the reality," replied he.

Lady Davenant stooped over Helen's shoulder to look at the hand-writing of the Earl of Essex—the writing of the gallant Earl of Essex,

at sight of which, as she observed, the hearts of Queens have beat high. "What a crowd of associated ideas rise at the sight of that autograph! who can look at it without some emotion?"

Helen could not. Beauclerc in a tone of raillery said he was sure, from the eager interest Miss Stanley took in these autographs, that she would in time become a collector herself; and he did not doubt that he should see her with a valuable museum, in which should be preserved the old pens of great men, that of Cardinal Chigi, for instance, who boasted that he wrote with the same pen for fifty years.

"And by that boast you know," said Lady Davenant, "convinced the Cardinal de Retz that he was not a great, but a very little man. We will not have that pen in Helen's museum."

"Why not?" Beauclerc asked, "it was full as well worth having as many of the relics to be found in most young ladies' and even old gentlemen's museums. It was quite sufficient whether a man had been great or little that he had been talked of,—that he had been something of a *lion*—to make any thing belonging to him

valuable to collectors, who preserve and worship even 'the parings of lions' claws.'"

That class of indiscriminate collectors Helen gave up to his ridicule; still he was not satisfied. He went on to the whole class of 'lion-hunters,' as he called them, condemning indiscriminately all those who were anxious to see celebrated people; he hoped Miss Stanley was not one of that class.

"No, not a lion-hunter," said Helen; she hoped she never should be one of that set, but she confessed she had a great desire to see and to know distinguished persons, and she hoped that this sort of curiosity, or as she would rather call it enthusiasm, was not ridiculous, and did not deserve to be confounded with the mere trifling vulgar taste for sight-seeing and lion-hunting.

Beauclerc half smiled, but, not answering immediately, Lady Davenant said, that for her part she did not consider such enthusiasm as ridiculous; on the contrary, she liked it, especially in young people. "I consider the warm admiration of talent and virtue in youth as a promise of future excellence in maturer age."

"And yet," said Beauclerc, "the maxim 'not to admire,' is, I believe, the most approved in philosophy, and in practice is the great secret of happiness in this world."

"In the *fine* world, it is a fine air, I know," said Lady Davenant. "Among a set of fashionable young somnambulists it is doubtless the only art they know to make men happy or to keep them so; but this has nothing to do with philosophy, Beauclerc, though it has to do with conceit or affectation."

Mr. Beauclerc, now piqued, with a look and voice of repressed feeling, said that he hoped her ladyship did not include him among that set of fashionable somnambulists.

"I hope you will not include yourself in it," answered Lady Davenant; "it is contrary to your nature, and if you join the *nil admirari* coxcombs, it can be only for fashion's sake — mere affectation."

Beauclerc made no reply, and Lady Davenant, turning to Helen, told her that several celebrated people were soon to come to Clarendon Park, and congratulated her upon the pleasure she would have in seeing them. "Be-

sides being a great pleasure, it is a real advantage," continued she, "to see and to be acquainted early in life with superior people. It enables one to form a standard of excellence, and raises that standard high and bright. In men, the enthusiasm becomes glorious ambition to excel in arts or arms; in woman, it refines and elevates the taste, and is so far a preventive against frivolous, vulgar company, and all their train of follies and vices. I can speak from my own recollection, of the great happiness it was to me when I, early in life, became acquainted with some of the illustrious of my day."

"And may I ask," said Beauclerc, "if any of them equalled the expectations you had formed of them?"

"Some far exceeded them," said Lady Davenant.

"You were fortunate. Every body cannot expect to be so happy," said Beauclerc. "I believe, in general it is found that few great men of any times stand the test of near acquaintance. No man——"

"Spare me!" cried Lady Davenant, inter-

rupting him, for she imagined she knew what he was going to say; "oh! spare me that old sentence, 'No man is a hero to his valet de chambre.' I cannot endure to hear that for the thousandth time; I heartily wish it had never been said at all."

"So do I," replied Beauclerc; but Lady Davenant had turned away, and he now spoke in so low a voice, that only Helen heard him. "So do I detest that quotation, not only for being hackneyed, but for having been these hundred years the comfort both of lean-jawed envy and fat mediocrity."

He took up one of Helen's pencils and began to cut it—he looked vexed, and low to her observed, "Lady Davenant did not do me the honour to let me finish my sentence."

"Then," said Helen, "if Lady Davenant misunderstood you, why do not you explain?"

"No, no, it is not worth while, if she could so mistake me."

"But anybody may be mistaken; do explain."

"No, no," said he, very diligently cutting

the pencil to pieces; "she is engaged, you see, with somebody—something else."

"But now she has done listening."

"No, no, not now; there are too many people, and it's of no consequence."

By this time the company were all eagerly talking of every remarkable person they had seen, or that they regretted not having seen. Lady Cecilia now called upon each to name the man among the celebrated of modern days, whom they should most like to have seen. By acclamation they all named Sir Walter Scott, "The Ariosto of the North."

All but Beauclerc; he did not join the general voice, he said low to Helen with an air of disgust—"How tired I am of hearing him called 'The Ariosto of the North!'"

"But by whatever name," said Helen, "surely you join in that general wish to have seen him?"

"Yes, yes, I am sure of your vote," cried Lady Cecilia coming up to them. "You, Granville, would rather have seen Sir Walter Scott than any author since Shakspeare—would not you?"

"Pardon me, on the contrary, I am glad that I have never seen him."

"Glad not to have seen him!—*not?*"

The word *not* was repeated with astonished incredulous emphasis by all voices. "Glad not to have seen Sir Walter Scott! How extraordinary! What can Mr. Beauclerc mean?"

"To make us all stare," said Lady Davenant, "so do not gratify him. Do not wonder at him; we cannot believe what is impossible, you know, only because it is impossible. But," continued she, laughing, "I know how it is. The spirit of contradiction—the spirit of singularity—two of your familiars, Granville, have got possession of you again, and we must have patience while the fit is on."

"But I have not, and will not have patience," said Lord Davenant, whose good-nature seldom failed, but who was now quite indignant.

"I wonder you are surprised, my dear Lord," said Lady Davenant, "for Mr. Beauclerc likes so much better to go wrong by himself than to go right with all the world, that you could not expect that he would join the loud voice of universal praise."

"I hear the loud voice of universal execration," said Beauclerc; "you have all abused me, but whom have I abused? What have I said?"

"Nothing," replied Lady Cecilia; "that is what we complain of. I could have better borne any abuse than indifference to Sir Walter Scott."

"Indifference!" exclaimed Beauclerc—"what did I say, Lady Cecilia, from which you could infer that I felt indifference? Indifferent to him whose name I cannot pronounce without emotion! I alone, of all the world, indifferent to that genius, pre-eminent and unrivalled, who has so long commanded the attention of the whole reading public, arrested at will the instant order of the day by tales of other times, and in this commonplace, this every-day existence of ours, created a holiday world, where, undisturbed by vulgar cares, we may revel in a fancy region of felicity, peopled with men of other times—shades of the historic dead, more illustrious and brighter than in life!"

"Yes, the great enchanter," cried Cecilia.

"Great and good enchanter," continued

Beauclerc, " for in his magic there is no dealing with unlawful means. To work his ends, there is never aid from any one of the bad passions of our nature. In his writings there is no private scandal—no personal satire—no bribe to human frailty—no libel upon human nature. And among the lonely, the sad, and the suffering, how has he medicined to repose the disturbed mind, or elevated the dejected spirit!—perhaps fanned to a flame the unquenched spark, in souls not wholly lost to virtue. His morality is not in purple patches, ostentatiously obtrusive, but woven in through the very texture of the stuff. He paints man as he is, with all his faults, but with his redeeming virtues—the world as it goes, with all its compensating good and evil, yet making each man better contented with his lot. Without our well knowing how, the whole tone of our minds is raised — for, thinking nobly of our kind, he makes us think more nobly of ourselves!"

Helen, who had sympathised with Beauclerc in every word he had said, felt how true it is that

" —— Next to genius, is the power
Of feeling where true genius lies."

"Yet after all this, Granville," said Lady Cecilia, "you would make us believe you never wished to have seen this great man?"

Beauclerc made no answer.

"Oh! how I wish I had seen him!" said Helen to Lady Davenant, the only person present who had had that happiness.

"If you have seen Raeburn's admirable pictures, or Chantrey's speaking bust," replied Lady Davenant, "you have as complete an idea of Sir Walter Scott as painting or sculpture can give. The first impression of his appearance and manner was surprising to me, I recollect, from its quiet, unpretending good-nature; but scarcely had that impression been made before I was struck with something of the chivalrous courtesy of other times. In his conversation you would have found all that is most delightful in all his works—the combined talents and knowledge of the historian, novelist, antiquary, and poet. He recited poetry admirably, his whole face and figure kindling as he spoke: but whether talking, reading, or reciting, he never tired me, even with admiring; and it is curious that, in convers-

ing with him, I frequently found myself forgetting that I was speaking to Sir Walter Scott; and, what is even more extraordinary, forgetting that Sir Walter Scott was speaking to me, till I was awakened to the conviction by his saying something which no one else could have said. Altogether he was certainly the most perfectly agreeable and perfectly amiable great man I ever knew."

"And now, mamma," said Lady Cecilia, "do make Granville confess honestly he would give the world to have seen him."

"Do, Lady Davenant," said Helen, who saw, or thought she saw, a singular emotion in Beauclerc's countenance, and fancied he was upon the point of yielding; but Lady Davenant, without looking at him, replied,—"No, my dear, I will not ask him — I will not encourage him in *affectation*."

At that word dark grew the brow of Beauclerc, and he drew back, as it were, into his shell, and out of it came no more that night, nor the next morning at breakfast. But, as far as could be guessed, he suffered internally, and no effort made to relieve did him any good, so

every one seemed to agree that it was much better to let him alone, to let him be moody in peace, hoping that in time the mood would change; but it changed not till the middle of that day, when, as Helen was sitting working in Lady Davenant's room, while she was writing, two quick knocks were heard at the door.

"Come in!" said Lady Davenant.

Mr. Beauclerc stood pausing on the threshold——

"Do not go, Miss Stanley," said he, looking very miserable, and ashamed, and proud, and then ashamed again.

"What is the matter, Granville?" said Lady Davenant.

"I am come to have a thorn taken out of my mind," said he — "two thorns which have sunk deep, kept me awake half the night. Perhaps, I ought to be ashamed to own I have felt pain from such little things. But so it is; though, after all, I am afraid they will be invisible to you, Lady Davenant."

"I will try with a magnifying-glass," said she, "lend me that of your imagination, Gran-

ville — a high power, and do not look so very miserable, or Miss Stanley will laugh at you."

"Miss Stanley is too good to laugh."

"That is being too good indeed," said Lady Davenant. "Well, now to the point."

"You were very unjust to me, Lady Davenant, yesterday, and unkind."

"Unkind is a woman's word; but go on."

"Surely man may mark 'unkindness' altered eye' as well as woman," said Beauclerc; "and from a woman and a friend he may and must feel it, or he is more or less than man."

"Now what can you have to say, Granville, that will not be anticlimax to this exordium?"

"I will say no more if you talk of exordiums and anticlimaxes," cried he. "You accused me yesterday of affectation—twice, when I was no more affected than you are."

"Oh! is that my crime? Is that what has hurt you so dreadfully? Here is the thorn that has gone in so deep! I am afraid that, as is usual, the accusation hurt the more because it was——"

"Do not say 'true,'" interrupted Beauclerc, "for you really cannot believe it, Lady Dave-

nant. You know me, and all my faults, and I have plenty; but you need not accuse me of one that I have not, and which from the bottom of my soul I despise. Whatever are my faults, they are at least real, and my own."

"You may allow him that," said Helen.

"Well I will—I do," said Lady Davenant; "to appease you, poor injured innocence; though any one in the world might think you affected at this moment. Yet I, who know you, know that it is pure real folly. Yes, yes, I acquit you of affectation."

Beauclerc's face instantly cleared up.

"But you said two thorns had gone into your mind—one is out, now for the other."

"I do not feel that other, now," said Beauclerc; "it was only a mistake. When I began with 'No man,' I was not going to say, 'No man is a hero to his valet de chambre.' If I had been allowed to finish my sentence, it would have saved a great deal of trouble. I was going to say that no man admires excellence more fervently than I do, and that my very reason for wishing not to see celebrated people is, lest the illusion should be dispelled.

"No description ever gives us an exact idea of any person, so that when any one has been much described and talked of, before we see them we form in our mind's eye some image, some notion of our own, which always proves to be unlike the reality; and when we do afterwards see it, even if it be fairer or better than our imagination, still at first there is a sort of disappointment, from the non-agreement with our previously formed conception. Everybody is disappointed the first time they see Hamlet, or Falstaff, as I think Dugald Stewart observes."

"True; and I remember," said Lady Davenant, "Madame de la Rochejaquelin once said to me, 'I hate that people should come to see me. I know it destroys the illusion.'"

"Yes," cried Beauclerc; "how much I dread to destroy any of those blessed illusions, which make the real happiness of life. Let me preserve the objects of my idolatry; I would not approach too near the shrine; I fear too much light. I would not know that they were false!"

"Would you then be deceived?" said Lady Davenant.

"Yes," cried he; "sooner would I believe in all the fables of the Talmud than be without the ecstasy of veneration. It is the curse of age to be thus miserably disenchanted; to outlive all our illusions, all our hopes. That may be my doom in age, but, in youth, the high spring-time of existence, I will not be cursed with such a premature ossification of the heart. Oh! rather, ten thousand times rather, would I die this instant!"

"Well! but there is not the least occasion for your dying," said Lady Davenant, "and I am seriously surprised that you should suffer so much from such slight causes; how will you ever get through the world if you stop thus to weigh every light word?"

"The words of most people," replied he, "pass by me like the idle wind; but I do weigh every word from the very few whom I esteem, admire, and love; with my friends, perhaps, I am too susceptible, I love them so deeply"

This is an excuse for susceptibility of temper which flatters friends too much to be easily rejected. Even Lady Davenant admitted it, and Helen thought it was all natural.

## CHAPTER XIII.

LADY CECILIA was now impatient to have the house filled with company. She gave Helen a *catalogue raisonné* of all who were expected at Clarendon Park, some for a fashionable three day's visit; some for a week; some for a fortnight or three weeks, be the same more or less. "I have but one fixed principle," said she, "but I *have* one,—never to have tiresome people when it can possibly be avoided. Impossible, you know, it is sometimes. One's own and one's husband's relations one must have; but, as for the rest, it's one's own fault if one fails in the first and last maxim of hospitality—to welcome the coming and speed the parting guest."

The first party who arrived were of Lady Davenant's particular friends, to whom Cecilia had kindly given the precedence, if not the preference, that her mother might have the pleasure

of seeing them, and that they might have the honour of taking leave of her, before her departure from England.

They were political, fashionable, and literary; some of ascendancy in society, some of parliamentary promise, and some of ministerial eminence—the aristocracy of birth and talents well mixed.

The aristocracy of birth and the aristocracy of talents are words now used more as a common-place antithesis, than as denoting a real difference or contrast. In many instances, among those now living, both are united in a manner happy for themselves and glorious for their country. England may boast of having among her young nobility

"The first in birth, the first in fame,"

men distinguished in literature and science, in senatorial eloquence and statesman-like abilities.

But in this party at Clarendon Park there were more of the literary and celebrated than without the presence of Lady Davenant could perhaps have been assembled, or perhaps would have been desired by the General and Lady

Cecilia. Cecilia's beauty and grace were of all societies, and the General was glad for Lady Davenant's sake, and proud for his own part, to receive these distinguished persons at his house.

Helen had seen some of them before at Cecilhurst and at the Deanery. By her uncle's friends she was kindly recognised, by others of course politely noticed; but miserably would she have been disappointed and mortified, if she had expected to fix general attention, or excite general admiration. Past and gone for ever are the days, if ever they were, when a young lady, on her entrance into life, captivated by a glance, overthrew by the first word, and led in triumph her train of admirers. These things are not to be done now-a-days.

Yet even when unnoticed Helen was perfectly happy. Her expectations were more than gratified in seeing and in hearing these distinguished people, and she sat listening to their conversation in delightful enjoyment, without even wanting to have it seen how well she understood.

There is a precious moment for young people, if taken at the prime, when first introduced into society, yet not expected, not called

upon to take a part in it, they, as standers by, may see not only all the play, but the characters of the players, and may learn more of life and of human nature in a few months, than afterwards in years, when they are themselves actors upon the stage of life, and become engrossed by their own parts. There is a time, before the passions are awakened, when the understanding, with all the life of nature, fresh from all that education can do to develop and cultivate, is at once eager to observe and able to judge, for a brief space blessed with the double advantages of youth and age. This time once gone is lost irreparably; and how often it is lost—in premature vanity, or premature dissipation!

Helen had been chiefly educated by a man, and a very sensible man, as Dean Stanley certainly was in all but money matters. Under his masculine care, while her mind had been brought forward on some points, it had been kept back on others, and while her understanding had been cultivated, it had been done without the aid of emulation or competition; not by touching the springs of pride, but by opening

sources of pure pleasure; and this pure pleasure she now enjoyed, grateful to that dear uncle.

For the single inimitable grace of simplicity which she possessed, how many mothers, governesses, and young ladies themselves, willingly, when they see how much it charms, would too late exchange half the accomplishments, all the acquirements, so laboriously achieved!

Beauclerc, who had seen something of the London female world, was, both from his natural taste and from contrast, pleased with Helen's fresh and genuine character, and he sympathised with all her silent delight. He never interrupted her in her enthusiastic contemplation of the great stars, but he would now and then seize an interval of rest to compare her observations with his own; anxious to know whether she estimated their relative magnitude and distances as he did. These snatched moments of comparison and proof of agreement in their observations, or the pleasure of examining the causes of their difference of opinion, enhanced the enjoyment of this brilliant fortnight; and not a cloud obscured the deep serene.

Notwithstanding all the ultra-refined nonsense Beauclerc had talked about his wish not to see remarkable persons, no one could enjoy it more, as Helen now perceived; and she saw also that he was considered as a man of promise among all these men of performance. But there were some, perhaps very slight things, which raised him still more in her mind, because they shewed superiority of character. She observed his manner towards the General in this company, where he had himself the 'vantage ground—so different now from what it had been in the Old-Forest battle, when only man to man, ward to guardian. Before these distinguished persons there was a look—a tone of deference at once most affectionate and polite.

"It is so generous," said Lady Cecilia to Helen; "is not it?" and Helen agreed.

This brilliant fortnight ended too soon, as Helen thought, but Lady Cecilia had had quite enough of it. "They are all to go to-morrow morning, and I am not sorry for it," said she at night, as she threw herself into an arm-chair in Helen's room; and, after having indulged in a refreshing yawn, she exclaimed,

"Very delightful, very delightful! as you say, Helen, it has all been; but I am not sure that I should not be very much tired if I had much more of it. Oh! yes, I admired them all amazingly, but then admiring all day long is excessively wearisome. The very attitude of looking up fatigues both body and mind. Mamma is never tired, because she never has to look up; she can always look down, and that 's so grand and so easy. She has no idea how the neck of my poor mind aches this minute; and my poor eyes! blasted with excess of light. How yours have stood it so well, Helen, I cannot imagine! how much stronger they must be than mine. I must confess, that, without the relief of music now and then, and ecarté, and that quadrille, bad as it was, I should never have got through it to-night alive or awake. But," cried she, starting up in her chair, "do you know Horace Churchill stays to-morrow. Such a compliment from him to stay a day longer than he intended! And do you know what he says of your eyes, Helen? — that they are the best listeners he ever spoke to. I should warn you

though, my dear, that he is something, and not a little, I believe, of a male coquette. Though he is not very young, but he well understands all the advantages of a careful toilette. He has, like that George Herbert in Queen Elizabeth's time, 'a genteel humour for dress.' He is handsome still, and his fine figure, and his fine feelings, and his fine fortune, have broken two or three hearts; nevertheless I am delighted that he stays, especially that he stays on your account."

"Upon my account!" exclaimed Helen. "Did not you see that, from the first day when Mr. Churchill had the misfortune to be placed beside me at dinner, he utterly despised me: he began to talk to me, indeed, but left his sentence unfinished, his good story untold, the instant he caught the eye of a grander auditor."

Lady Cecilia had seen this, and marvelled at a well-bred man so far forgetting himself in vanity; but this, she observed, was only the first day; he had afterwards changed his manner towards Helen completely.

"Yes, when he saw Lady Davenant thought

me worth speaking to. But, after all, it was quite natural that he should not know well what to say to me. I am only a young lady. I acquit him of all peculiar rudeness to me, for I am sure Mr. Churchill really could not talk for only one insignificant hearer, could not bring out his good things, unless he felt secure of possessing the attention of the whole dinner-table, so I quite forgive him."

"After this curse of forgiveness, my dear Helen, I will wish you a good night," said Lady Cecilia laughing; and she retired with a fear that there would not be jealousy enough between the gentlemen, or that Helen would not know how to play them one against another.

There is a pleasure in seeing a large party disperse; in staying behind when others go: — there is advantage as well as pleasure, which is felt by the timid, because they do not leave their characters behind them; and rejoiced in by the satirical, because the characters of the departed and departing are left behind, fair game for them. Of this advantage no one could be more sensible, no one availed himself of it with more promptitude and skill, than

Mr. Churchill: for well he knew that though wit may fail, humour may not take—though even flattery may pall upon the sense, scandal, satire, and sarcasm, are resources never failing for the lowest capacities, and sometimes for the highest.

This morning, in the library at Clarendon Park, he looked out of the window at the departing guests, and, as each drove off, he gave to each his *coup de patte*. To Helen, to whom it was new, it was wonderful to see how each, even of those next in turn to go, enjoyed the demolition of those who were just gone; how, blind to fate, they laughed, applauded, and licked the hand just raised to strike themselves. Of the first who went — "Most respectable people," said Lady Cecilia; "a *bonne mère de famille*."

"Most respectable people!" repeated Horace—"most respectable people, old coach and all." And then, as another party drove off — "No fear of anything truly respectable here."

"Now, Horace, how can you say so? — she is so amiable, and so clever."

"So clever! only, perhaps, a thought too

fond of English liberty and French dress. *Poissarde bien coiffée.*"

"*Poissarde!* of one of the best born, best bred women in England!" cried Lady Cecilia; *bien coiffée*, I allow."

"Lady Cecilia is *si coiffée de sa belle amie*, that I see I must not say a word against her, till — the fashion changes. But, hark! I hear a voice I never wish to hear."

"Yet nobody is better worth hearing——"

"Oh! yes, the Queen of the Blues — the Blue Devils!"

"Hush!" cried the Aide-de-camp, "she is coming in to take leave."

Then, as the Queen of the Blue Devils entered, Mr. Churchill, in the most humbly respectful manner, begged — "My respects — I trust your Grace will do me the favour — the justice to remember me to all your party who — do me the honour to bear me in mind—" then, as she left the room, he turned about and laughed.

"Oh! you sad, false man!" cried the lady next in turn to go. "I declare, Mr. Churchill, though I laugh, I am quite afraid to go off before you."

"Afraid! what could malice or envy itself find to say of your ladyship, *intacte* as you are? --*Intacte!*" repeated he, as she drove off, "*intacte!*—a well-chosen epithet, I flatter myself!"

"Yes, *intacte* — untouched — above the breath of slander," cried Lady Cecilia.

"I know it: so I say," replied Churchill: "fidelity that has stood all temptations — to which it has ever been exposed; and her husband is——"

"A near relation of mine," said Lady Cecilia. "I am not prudish as to scandal in general," continued she, laughing; "'a chicken, too, might do me good,' but then the fox must not prey at home. No one ought to stand by and to hear their own relations abused."

"A thousand pardons! I depended too much on the general maxim — that the nearer the bone the sweeter the slander."

"Nonsense!" said Lady Cecilia.

"I meant to say, the nearer the heart the dearer the blame. A cut against a first cousin may go wrong—but a bosom friend — oh! how I have succeeded against best friends; scolded all the while, of course, and called a monster.

But there is Sir Stephen bowing to you." Then, as Lady Cecilia kissed her hand to him from the window, Churchill went on: "By the by, without any scandal, seriously I heard something — I was quite concerned — that he had been of late less in his study and more in the boudoir of ——— Surely it cannot be true!"

"Positively false," said Lady Cecilia.

"At every breath a reputation dies," said Beauclerc.

"'Pon my soul, that 's true!" said the Aide-de-camp. "Positively, hit or miss, Horace has been going on, firing away with his wit, pop, pop, pop! till he has bagged — how many brace?"

Horace turned away from him contemptuously, and looked to see whereabouts Lady Davenant might be all this time.

## CHAPTER XIV

LADY DAVENANT was at the far end of the room engrossed, Churchill feared, by the newspaper—as he approached she laid it down, and said,

"How scandalous some of these papers have become, but it is the fault of the taste of the age. 'Those who live to please, must please to live.'"

Horace was not sure whether he was cut or not, but he had the presence of mind not to look hurt. He drew nearer to Lady Davenant, seated himself, and taking up a book as if he was tired of folly, to which he had merely condescended, he sat and read, and then sat and thought, the book hanging from his hand.

The result of these profound thoughts he gave to the public, not to the Aide-de-camp; no more of the little pop-gun pellets of wit — but now was brought out reason and philosophy.

In a higher tone he now reviewed the literary, philosophical, and political world, with touches of La Bruyere and Rochefoucault in the characters he drew and in the reflections he made; with an air, too, of sentimental contrition for his own penetration and fine moral sense, which compelled him to see and to be annoyed by the faults of such superior men.

The analysis he made of every mind was really perfect —— in one respect, not a grain of bad but was separated from the good, and held up clean and clear to public view. And as an anatomist he shewed such knowledge both of the brain and of the heart, such an admirable acquaintance with all their diseases, and handled the probe and the scalpel so well, with such a practised hand!

"Well, really this is comfortable," said Lord Davenant, throwing himself back in his armchair—"True English comfort, to sit at ease and see all one's friends so well dissected! Happy to feel that it is our duty to our neighbour to see him well cut up — ably anatomized for the good of society; and when I depart— when my time comes—as come it must, nobody

is to touch me but Professor Churchill. It will be a satisfaction to know that I shall be carved as a dish fit for gods, not hewed as a carcase for hounds. So now remember, Cecilia, I call on you to witness—I hereby, being of sound mind and body, leave and bequeath my character, with all my defects and deficiencies whatsoever, and all and any singular curious diseases of the mind, of which I may die possessed, wishing the same many for his sake, — to my good friend Doctor Horace Churchill, professor of moral, philosophic, and scandalous anatomy, to be by him dissected at his good pleasure for the benefit of society."

"Many thanks, my good Lord; and I accept your legacy for the honour — not the value of the gift, which everybody must be sensible is nothing," said Churchill, with a polite bow — "absolutely nothing. I shall never be able to make anything of it."

"Try—try, my dear friend," answered Lord Davenant. "Try, don't be modest."

"That would be difficult when so distinguished," said Beauclerc, with an admirable look of proud humility.

"Distinguished Mr. Horace Churchill assuredly is," said Lady Davenant, looking at him from behind her newspaper. "Distinguished above all his many competitors in this age of scandal; he has really raised the art to the dignity of a science. Satire, scandal, and gossip, now hand-in-hand — the three new graces: all on the same elevated rank — *three*, formerly considered as so different, and the last left to our inferior sex, but now, surely, to be a male gossip is no reproach."

"O, Lady Davenant! — male gossip — what an expression!"

"What a reality!"

"Male gossip! — '*Tombe sur moi le ciel!*'" cried Churchill.

"'*Pourvu que je me venge*,' always understood," pursued Lady Davenant; "but why be so afraid of the imputation of gossiping, Mr. Churchill? It is quite fashionable, and if so, quite respectable, you know, and in your style quite grand.

'And *gossiping* wonders at being so fine!'—

Malice, to be hated, needs but to be seen, but now when it is elegantly dressed we look upon

it without shame or consciousness of evil; we grow to doat upon it—so entertaining, so graceful, so refined. When vice loses half its grossness, it loses all its deformity. Humanity used to be talked of when our friends were torn to pieces, but now there is such a philosophical perfume thrown over the whole operation, that we are irresistibly attracted. How much we owe to such men as Mr. Churchill, who make us feel detraction virtue!"

He bowed low as Lady Davenant, summoned by her lord, left the room, and there he stood as one condemned but not penitent.

"If I have not been well sentenced," said he, as the door closed, "and made 'to feel detraction virtue!'—But since Lady Cecilia cannot help smiling at that, I am acquitted, and encouraged to sin again the first opportunity. But Lady Davenant shall not be by, nor Lord Davenant either."

Lady Cecilia sat down to write a note, and Mr. Churchill walked round the room in a course of critical observation on the pictures, of which, as of everything else, he was a supreme judge. At last he put his eye and his glass

down to something which singularly attracted his attention on one of the marble tables.

"Pretty!" said Lady Cecilia, "pretty are not they? — though one's so tired of them everywhere now — those doves!"

"Doves!" said Churchill, "what I am admiring are gloves, are not they, Miss Stanley?" said he, pointing to an old pair of gloves, which, much wrinkled and squeezed together, lay on the beautiful marble in rather an unsightly lump.

"Poor Doctor V——," cried Helen to Cecilia; "that poor Doctor V—— is as absent as ever! he is gone, and has forgotten his gloves!"

"Absent! oh, as ever!" said Lady Cecilia, going on with her note, "the most absent man alive."

"Too much of that sort of thing I think there is in Doctor V——," pursued Churchill: "a touch of absence of mind, giving the idea of high abstraction, becomes a learned man well enough; but then it should only be slight, as a *soupçon* of rouge, which may become a pretty woman; all depends on the measure, the taste, with which these things are managed—put on."

"There is nothing managed, nothing *put on* in Doctor V——," cried Helen, eagerly, her colour rising; "it is all perfectly sincere, true in him, whatever it be."

Beauclerc put down his book.

"All perfectly true! You really think so, Miss Stanley?" said Churchill, smiling, and looking superior down.

"I do, indeed," cried Helen.

"Charming—so young! How I do love that freshness of mind!"

"Impertinent fellow! I could knock him down," felt Beauclerc.

"And you think all Doctor V——'s humility true?" said Churchill.

"Yes, perfectly!" said Helen; "but I do not wonder you are surprised at it, Mr. Churchill."

She meant no *malice*, though for a moment he thought she did; and he winced under Beauclerc's smile.

"I do not wonder that any one who does not know Doctor V—— should be surprised by his great humility," added Helen.

"You are sure that it is not pride that apes humility?" asked Churchill.

"Yes, quite sure!"

"Yet—" said Churchill (putting his malicious finger through a great hole in the thumb of the Doctor's glove) "I should have fancied that I saw vanity through the holes in these gloves, as through the philosopher's cloak of old."

"Horace is a famous fellow for picking holes and making much of them, Miss Stanley, you see," said the Aide-de-camp.

"Vanity! Doctor V—— has no vanity!" said Helen, "if you knew him."

"No vanity! Whom does Miss Stanley mean?" cried the Aide-de-camp. "No vanity: that 's good. Who? Horace?"

"*Mauvais plaisant!*" Horace put him by, and, happily not easily put out of countenance, he continued to Helen,

"You give the good Doctor credit, too, for all his *naïveté?*" said Churchill.

"He does not want credit for it," said Helen, "he really has it."

"I wish I could see things as you do, Miss Stanley."

"Shew him that, Helen," cried Lady Cecilia, looking at a table beside them, on which

lay one of those dioramic prints which appear all a confusion of lines till you look at them in their right point of view "Shew him that—it all depends, and so does seeing characters, on getting the right point of view."

"Ingenious!" said Churchill, trying to catch the right position; "but I can't, I own—" then abruptly resuming, "Naïveté charms me at fifteen," and his eye glanced at Helen, then was retracted, then returning to his point of view, "at eighteen perhaps may do," and his eyes again turned to Helen, "at eighteen—it captivates me quite," and his eye dwelt. "But naïveté at past fifty, verging to sixty, is quite another thing, really rather too much for me. I like all things in season, and above all, simplicity will not bear long keeping. I have the greatest respect possible for our learned and excellent friend, but I wish this could be any way suggested to him, and that he would lay aside this out-of-season simplicity."

"He cannot lay aside his nature," said Helen, "and I am glad of it, it is such a good nature."

"Kind-hearted creature he is. I never heard him say a severe word of any one," said Lady Cecilia.

"What a sweet man he must be!" said Horace, making a face at which none present, not even Helen, could forbear to smile. "His heart, I am sure, is in the right place always. I only wish one could say the same of his wig. And would it be amiss if he sometimes (I would not be too hard upon him, Miss Stanley), once a fortnight, suppose—brushed, or caused to be brushed, that coat of his?"

"You have dusted his jacket for him famously, Horace, I think," said the Aide-de-camp.

At this instant the door opened, and in came the Doctor himself.

Lady Cecilia's hand was outstretched with her note, thinking, as the door opened, that she should see the servant come in, for whom she had rung.

"What surprises you all so, my good friends?" said the Doctor, stopping and looking round in all his native simplicity.

"My dear Doctor," said Lady Cecilia, "only we all thought you were gone— that 's all."

"And I am not gone, that's all. I stayed to write a letter, and I am come here to look for—but I cannot find—my——"

"Your gloves, perhaps, Doctor, you are looking for," said Churchill, going forward, and with an air of the greatest respect and consideration, both for the gloves and for their owner, he presented them; then shook the Doctor by the hand, with a cordiality which the good soul thought truly English, and, bowing him out, added, "How proud he had been to make his acquaintance, — *au revoir*, he hoped, in Park Lane."

"Oh you treacherous——!" cried Lady Cecilia, turning to Horace, as soon as the unsuspecting philosopher was fairly gone. "Too bad really! If he were not the most simple-minded creature extant, he must have seen, suspected, something from your look; and what would have become of you if the Doctor had come in one moment sooner, and had heard you—— I was really frightened."

"Frightened! so was I, almost out of my wits," said Churchill. "*Les revenans* always frighten one: and they never hear any good of

themselves, for which reason I make it a principle, when once I have left a room, full of friends especially, never — never to go back. My gloves, my hat, my coat, I'd leave, sooner than lose my friends. Once I heard it said, by one who knew the world and human nature better than any of us—once I heard it said in jest, but in sober earnest I say, that I would not for more than I am worth be placed, without his knowing it, within earshot of my best friend."

"What sort of a best friend can your's be?" cried Beauclerc.

"Much like other people's, I suppose," replied Horace, speaking with perfect nonchalance — "much like other people's best friends. Whosoever expects to find better, I guess, will find worse, if he live in the world we live in."

"May I go out of the world before I believe or suspect any such thing?" cried Beauclerc. "Rather than have the Roman curse light upon me, 'May you survive all your friends and relations!' may I die a thousand times!"

"Who talks of dying, in a voice so sweet — a voice so loud?" said provoking Horace, in

his calm, well-bred tone; "for my part, I, who have the honour of speaking to you, can boast, that never since I was of years of discretion (counting new style, beginning at thirteen, of course) — never have I lost a friend, a sincere friend — never, for this irrefragable reason — since that nonage, never was I such a neophyte as to fancy I had found that *lusus naturæ*, a friend perfectly sincere."

"How I pity you!" cried Beauclerc, "if you are in earnest; but in earnest you can't be."

"Pardon me, I can, and I am. And in earnest you will oblige me, Mr. Beauclerc, if you will spare me your pity: for, all things in this world considered," said Horace Churchill, drawing himself up, "I do not conceive that I am much an object of pity." Then, turning upon his heel, he walked away, conscious however, half an instant afterwards, that he had drawn himself up too high, and that for a moment his temper had spoiled his tone, and betrayed him into a look and manner too boastful, bordering on the ridiculous. He was in haste to repair the error.

Not Garrick, in the height of his celebrity

and of his susceptibility, was ever more anxious than Horace Churchill to avert the stroke of ridicule—to guard against the dreaded smile. As he walked away, he felt behind his back that those he left were smiling in silence.

Lady Cecilia had thrown herself on a sofa, resting, after the labour of *l'éloquence de billet.* He stopped, and, leaning over the back of the sofa on which she reclined, repeated an Italian line in which was the word "*pavoneggiarsi.*"

"My dear Lady Cecilia, you, who understand and feel Italian so well, how expressive are some of their words? *Pavoneggiarsi!*—untranslateable. One cannot say well in English, to peacock oneself. To make oneself like unto a peacock is flat; but, *pavoneggiarsi* — action, passion, picture, all in one! To plume oneself comes nearest to it; but the word cannot be given, even by equivalents, in English; nor can it be naturalized, because, in fact, we have not the feeling. An Englishman is too proud to boast — too bashful to strut; if even he *peacocks himself*, it is in a moment of anger, not in display. The language of every country," continued he, raising his voice, in order to

reach Lady Davenant, who just then returned to the room, as he did not wish to waste a philosophical observation on Lady Cecilia — "the language of every country is, to a certain degree, evidence in record, history of its character and manners." Then, lowering his voice almost to a whisper, but very distinct, turning while he spoke, so as to make sure that Miss Stanley heard — "Your young friend this morning quite captivated me by her nature — nature, the thing that now is most uncommon, a real natural woman; and when in a beauty, how charming! How delicious when one meets with *effusion de cœur:* a young lady, too, who speaks pure English, not a leash of languages at once; and cultivated, too, your friend is, for one does not like ignorance, if one could have knowledge without pretension — so hard to find the golden mean!—and if one could find it, one might not be nearer to——"

Lady Cecilia listened for the finishing word, but none came. It all ended in a sigh, to be interpreted as she pleased. A look towards the ottoman, where Beauclerc had now taken his seat beside Miss Stanley, seemed to point

the meaning out: but Lady Cecilia knew her man too well to seem to understand him.

Beauclerc, seated on the ottoman, was shewing to Helen some passages in the book he was reading; she read with attention, and from time to time looked up with a smile of intelligence and approbation. What either said Horace could not hear, and he was the more curious, and when the book was put down, after carelessly opening others he took it up. Very much surprised was he to find it neither novel nor poem: many passages were marked with pencil notes of approbation, he took it for granted these were Beauclerc's; there he was mistaken, they were Lady Davenant's. She was at her work-table. Horace, book in hand, approached; the book was not in his line, it was more scientific than literary—it was for posterity more than for the day; he had only turned it over as literary men turn over scientific books, to seize what may serve for a new simile or a good allusion; besides, among his philosophical friends, the book being talked of, it was well to know enough of it to have something to say, and he had said well, very

*judiciously* he had praised it among the elect; but now it was his fancy to depreciate it with all his might; not that he disliked the author or the work now more than he had done before, but he was in the humour to take the opposite side from Beauclerc, so he threw the book from him contemptuously.

"Rather a slight hasty thing, in my opinion," said he.

Beauclerc's eyes took fire as he exclaimed, "Slight! hasty! this most noble, most solid work!"

"Solid in your opinion," said Churchill, with a smile deferential, slightly sneering.

"Our own opinion is all that either of us can give," said Beauclerc; "in my opinion it is the finest view of the progress of natural philosophy, the most enlarged, the most just in its judgments of the past, and in its prescience of the future; in the richness of experimental knowledge, in its theoretic invention, the greatest work by any one individual since the time of Bacon."

"And Bacon is under your protection, too?"

"Protection! my protection?" said Beauclerc.

"Pardon me, I simply meant to ask if you are one of those who swear by Lord Verulam."

"I swear by no man, I do not swear at all, not on philosophical subjects especially; swearing adds nothing to faith," said Beauclerc.

"I stand corrected," said Churchill, "and I would go further, and add that in argument enthusiasm adds nothing to reason — much as I admire, as we all admire," glancing at Miss Stanley, "that enthusiasm with which this favoured work has been advocated!"

"I could not help speaking warmly," cried Beauclerc; "it is a book to inspire enthusiasm; there is such a noble spirit all through it, so pure from petty passions, from all vulgar jealousies, all low concerns! Judge of a book, somebody says, by the impression it leaves on your mind when you lay it down; this book stands that test, at least with me, I lay it down with such a wish to follow — with steps ever so unequal, still to follow, where it points the way."

"Bravo! bravissimo! hear him, hear him!

print him, print him ! hot-press from the author to the author, hot-press !" cried Churchill, and he laughed.

Like one suddenly wakened from the trance of enthusiasm by the cold touch of ridicule, stood Beauclerc, brought down from heaven to earth, and by that horrid little laugh, not the heart's laugh.

" But my being ridiculous does not make my cause so, and that is a comfort."

" And another comfort you may have, my dear Granville," said Lady Davenant, " that ridicule is not the test of truth; truth should be the test of ridicule."

" But where is the book ?" continued Beauclerc.

Helen gave it to him.

" Now, Mr. Churchill," said Beauclerc; " I am really anxious, I know you are such a good critic, will you shew me these faults? blame as well as praise must always be valuable from those who themselves excel."

" You are too good," said Churchill.

" Will you then be good enough to point out the errors for me ?"

"Oh, by no means," cried Churchill, "don't note me, do not quote me, I am nobody, and I cannot give up my authorities."

"But the truth is all I want to get at," said Beauclerc.

"Let her rest, my dear Sir, at the bottom of her well; there she is, and there she will be for ever and ever, and depend upon it none of our windlassing will ever bring her up."

"Such an author as this," continued Beauclerc, "would have been so glad to have corrected any error."

"So every author tells you, but I never saw one of them who did not look blank at a list of errata — if you knew how little one is thanked for them!"

"But you would be thanked now," said Beauclerc:—"the faults in style, at least."

"Nay, I am no critic," said Churchill, confident in his habits of literary detection; "but if you ask me," said he, as he disdainfully flirted the leaves back and forward with a "There now!" and "Here now!" "We should not call that good writing—you could not think this correct? I may be wrong, but

I should not use this phrase. Hardly English that — colloquial, I think; and this awkward ablative case absolute—never admitted now."

"Thank you," said Beauclerc, "these faults are easily mended."

"Easily mended, say you? I say, better make a new one."

"WHO COULD?" said Beauclerc.

"How many faults you see," said Helen, "which I should never have perceived unless you had pointed them out, and I am sorry to know them now."

Smiling at Helen's look of sincere mortification, in contrast at this moment with Mr. Churchill's air of satisfied critical pride, Lady Davenant said,

"Why sorry, my dear Helen? No human work can be perfect; Mr. Churchill may be proud of that strength of eye which in such a powerful light can count the spots. But whether it be the best use to make of his eyes, or the best use that can be made of the light, remains to be considered."

## CHAPTER XV

BEYOND measure was Churchill provoked to find Lady Davenant against him and on the same side as Granville Beauclerc — all unused to contradiction in his own society, where he had long been supreme, he felt a difference of opinion so sturdily maintained as a personal insult.

For so young a man as Beauclerc, yet unknown to fame, not only to challenge the combat but to obtain the victory, was intolerable; and the more so, because his young opponent appeared no ways elated or surprised, but seemed satisfied to attribute his success to the goodness of his cause.

Churchill had hitherto always managed wisely his great stakes and pretensions in both the fashionable and literary world. He had never actually published anything except a clever

article or two in a review, or an epigram, attributed to him but not acknowledged. Having avoided giving his measure, it was believed he was above all who had been publicly tried — it was always said—" If Horace Churchill would but publish, he would surpass every other author of our times."

Churchill accordingly dreaded and hated all who might by possibility approach the throne of fashion, or interfere with his dictatorship in a certain literary set in London, and from this moment he began cordially to detest Beauclerc —he viewed him with scornful yet with jealous eyes; but his was the jealousy of vanity, not of love; it regarded Lady Davenant and his fashionable reputation in the first place—Helen only in the second.

Lady Davenant observed all this, and was anxious to know how much or how little Helen had seen, and what degree of interest it excited in her mind. One morning, when they were alone together, looking over a cabinet of cameos, Lady Davenant pointed to one which she thought like Mr. Beauclerc. Helen did not see the likeness.

"People see likenesses very differently," said Lady Davenant. "But you and I, Helen, usually see characters, if not faces, with the same eyes. I have been thinking of these two gentlemen, Mr. Churchill and Mr. Beauclerc—which do you think the most agreeable?"

"Mr. Churchill is amusing certainly," said Helen, "but I think Mr. Beauclerc's conversation much more interesting — though Mr. Churchill is agreeable, sometimes—when—"

"When he flatters you," said Lady Davenant.

"When he is not satirical — I was going to say," said Helen.

"There is a continual petty brilliancy, a petty effort too," continued Lady Davenant, "in Mr. Churchill, that tires me—sparks struck perpetually, but then you hear the striking of the flints, the clink of the tinder-box."

Helen, though she admitted the tinder-box, thought it too low a comparison. She thought Churchill's were not mere sparks.

"Well, fireworks if you will," said Lady Davenant, "that rise, blaze, burst, fall, and leave you in darkness, and with a disagreeable

smell too: and it is all *feu d'artifice* after all. Now in Beauclerc there is too little art and too ardent nature. Some French friends of mine who knew both, said of Mr. Churchill, '*De l'esprit on ne peut pas plus, même à Paris*, the highest compliment a Parisian can pay. but they allowed that Beauclerc had '*beaucoup plus d'ame.*'"

"Yes," said Helen; "how far superior!"

"It has been said," continued Lady Davenant, "that it is safer to judge of men by their actions than by their words, but there are few actions and many words in life; and if women would avail themselves of their daily, hourly, opportunities of judging people by their words, they would get at the natural characters, or, what is of just as much consequence, they would penetrate through the acquired habits: and here, Helen, you have two good studies before you."

Preoccupied as Helen was with the certainty of Beauclerc being an engaged, almost a married man, and looking, as she did, on Churchill as one who must consider her utterly beneath his notice, she listened to Lady Davenant's

remarks as she would have done to observations about two characters in a novel or on the stage.

As Churchill could not immediately manifest his hatred of Beauclerc, it worked inwardly the more. He did not sleep well this night, and when he got up in the morning, there was something the matter with him. Nervous, bilious—cross it could not be;—*journalier* (a French word settles everything)—*journalier* he allowed he was; he rather gloried in it, because his being permitted to be so proved his power,—his prerogative of fortune and talent combined.

In the vast competition of the London world, it is not permitted to every man to be in his humour or out of his humour at pleasure; but, by an uncommon combination of circumstances, Churchill had established his privilege of caprice; he was allowed to have his bad and his good days, and the highest people and the finest smiled, and submitted to his "*cachet de faveur et de disgrace;*" and when he was sulky, rude, or snappish, called it only Horace Churchill's way. They even prided themselves

on his preferences and his aversions. "Horace is always charming when he is with us."—"With me you have no idea how delightful he is."—"Indeed I must do him the justice to say, that I never found him otherwise."—While the less favoured permitted him to be as rude as he pleased, and only petted him, and told of his odd ways to those who sighed in vain to have him at their parties. But Lady Davenant was not a person to pet or spoil a child of any age, and to the General Mr. Churchill was not particularly agreeable — not his sort; while to Lady Cecilia, secure in grace, beauty, and fashion, his humours were only matter of amusement, and she bore with him pleasantly and laughingly.

"Such weather!" cried he in a querulous tone; "how can a man have any sense in such weather? Some foreigner says, that the odious climate of England is an over-balance for her good constitution. The sun of the south is in truth well worth the liberty of the north. It is a sad thing," said he, with a very sentimental air, "that a free-born Briton should be servile to these skyey influences;" and, grumbling

on, he looked out of the window as cross as he pleased, and nobody minded him. The Aide-de-camp civilly agreed with him that it was horrid weather, and likely to rain, and it did rain; and every one knows how men, like children, are in certain circumstances affected miserably by a rainy day. There was no going out; horses at the door, and obliged to be dismissed. Well, since there could be no riding, the next best thing, the Aide-de-camp thought, was to talk of horses, and the officers all grew eager, and Churchill had a mind to exert himself so far as to shew them that he knew more of the matter than they did; that he was no mere book-man; but on this unlucky day, all went wrong. It happened that Horace fell into some grievous error concerning the genealogy of a famous race-horse, and, disconcerted more than he would have been at being convicted of any degree of moral turpitude, vexed and ashamed, he talked no more of Newmarket or of Doncaster, left the race-ground to those who prided themselves on the excellences of their four-footed betters, and lounged into the billiard-room.

He found Lady Cecilia playing with Beauclerc; Miss Stanley was looking on. Churchill was a famous billiard-player, and took his turn to shew how much better than Beauclerc he performed, but this day his hand was out, his eye not good; he committed blunders of which a novice might have been ashamed; took his antagonist's ball for his own, *ran a coup*, and finished in a passion by tearing the cloth with his cue. And there was Miss Stanley and there was Beauclerc by to see! and Beauclerc pitied him!

O line extreme of human misery!

He retreated to the book-room, but there the intellectual Horace, with all the sages, poets, and novelists of every age within his reach, reached them not; but, with his hands in his pockets, like any squire or schoolboy under the load of ignorance or penalties of idleness, stood before the chimney-piece, eyeing the pendule, and verily believing that this morning the hands went backward. Dressing-time at last came, and dinner-time, bringing relief how often to man and child ill-tempered; but this

day to Churchill dinner brought only discomfiture worse discomfited.

Some of the neighbouring families were to dine at Clarendon Park. Mr. Churchill abhorred country neighbours and country gentlemen. Among these, however, were some not unworthy to be perceived by him; and besides these, there were some foreign officers; one in particular, from Spain, of high rank and birth, of the *sangre azula*, the *blue blood*, who have the privilege of the silken cord if they should come to be hanged. This Spaniard was a man of distinguished talent, and for him Horace might have been expected to shine out; it was his pleasure, however, this day to disappoint expectations, and to do "the dishonour of his country." He would talk only of eating, of which he was privileged not only to speak but to judge, and pronounce upon *en dernier ressort*, though this was only an air, for he was not really a gourmand; but after ogling through his glass the distant dishes, when they with a wish came nigh, he, after a cursory glance or a close inspection, made them with a nod retire.

At last he thought an opportunity offered for bringing in a well-prepared anecdote which he had about Cambaçeres, and a hot blackbird and white feet, but unluckily a country gentleman would tell some history of a battle between poachers and gamekeepers, which fixed the attention of the company till the moment for the anecdote was past.

Horace left his tale untold, and spoke word never more till a subject was started on which he thought he could come out unrivalled. General Clarendon had some remarkably good wines. Churchill was referred to as a judge, and he allowed them to be all good, but he prided himself on possessing a certain Spanish wine, esteemed above all price, because not to be had for money — *amontillado* is its name. Horace appealed to the Spanish officer, who confirmed all he said of this vinous phenomenon. "No cultivator can be certain of producing it. It has puzzled, almost to death, all the *growers* of Xeres: — it is a variety of sherry, almost as difficult to judge of as to procure."

But Mr. Churchill boasted he had some, un-

doubtedly genuine; he added, "that Spanish judges had assured him his taste was so accurate he might venture to pronounce upon the difficult question of amontillado or not?"

While he yet spoke, General Clarendon, unawares, placed before him some of this very fine wine, which, as he finished speaking, Churchill swallowed without knowing it from some other sherry which he had been drinking. He would have questioned that it was genuine, but the Spaniard, as far as he could pretend to judge, thought it unquestionable.

Churchill's countenance fell in a manner that quite surprised Helen, and exceedingly amused Lady Cecilia. He was more mortified and vexed by this failure than by all the rest, for the whole table smiled.

The evening of this day of misfortune was not brighter than the morning, every thing was wrong—even at night—at night when at last the dinner company, the country visiters, relieved him from their presence, and when some comfort might be had, he thought, stretched in a good easy chair—Lord Davenant had set him the example. But something had hap-

pened to all the chairs,—there were a variety of fashionable kinds; he tried them by turns, but none of them this night would suit him. Yet Lady Cecilia maintained (for the General had chosen them) that they were each and all of them in their way comfortable, in the full English spirit of the word, and according to the French explanation of *comfortable*, given to us by the Duchess d'Abrantes, *convenablement bon;* but in compassion to Mr. Churchill's fastidious restlessness, she would now shew him a perfection of a chair which she had just had made for her own boudoir. She ordered that it should be brought, and in it rolled, and it was looked at in every direction and sat in, and no fault could be found with it, even by the great fault-finder; but what was it called? It was neither a lounger, nor a dormeuse, nor a Cooper, nor a Nelson, nor a kangaroo: a chair without a name would never do; in all things fashionable the name is more than half. Such a happy name as kangaroo Lady Cecilia despaired of finding for her new favourite, but she begged some one would give it a good one; whoever gave her the

best name should be invited to the honours and pleasures of the sitting in this chair for the rest of the night.

Her eyes, and all eyes, turned upon Mr. Churchill, but whether the occasion was too great, or that his desire to satisfy the raised expectation of the public was too high strained, or that the time was out of joint, or that he was out of sorts, the fact was, he could find no name.

Beauclerc, who had not yet tried the chair, sank into its luxurious depth, and leaning back, asked if it might not be appropriately called the " Sleepy-hollow."

" Sleepy-hollow!" repeated Lady Cecilia, " excellent!" and by acclamation " Sleepy-hollow" was approved; but when Beauclerc was invited to the honours of the sitting, he declined, declaring that the name was not his invention, only his recollection; it had been given by a friend of his to some such easy chair.

This magnanimity was too much for Horace: he looked at his watch, found it was bed-time, pushed the chair out of his way, and departed; Beauclerc, the first and last idea in this his day of mortifications.

Seeing a man subject to these petty irritations lowers him in the eyes of woman. For that susceptibility of temper arising from the jealousy of love, even when excited by trifles, woman makes all reasonable, all natural, allowance; but for the jealousy of self-love she has no pity. Unsuited to the manly character!—so Helen thought, and so every woman thinks.

## CHAPTER XVI.

It was expected by all who had witnessed his discomfiture and his parting push to the chair, that Mr. Churchill would be off early in the morning—such was his wont when he was disturbed in vanity: but he reappeared at breakfast.

This day was a good day with Horace; he determined it should be so, and though it was again a wet day, he now shewed that he could rule the weather of his own humour, when intensity of will was wakened by rivalry. He made himself most agreeable, and the man of yesterday was forgotten or remembered only as a foil to the man of to-day. The words he so much loved to hear, and to which he had so often surreptitiously listened, were now repeated, 'No one can be so agreeable as Horace Churchill is on his good days!'

Bright he shone out, all gaiety and graciousness; the *cachet de faveur* was for all, but its

finest impression was for Helen. He tried flattery, and wit, each playing on the other with reflected and reflecting lustre, for a woman naturally says to herself, "When this man has so much wit, his flattery even must be worth something."

And another day came, and another, and another party of friends filled the house, and still Mr. Churchill remained, and was now the delight of all. As far as concerned his successes in society, no one was more ready to join in applause than Beauclerc; but when Helen was in question he was different, though he had reasoned himself into the belief that he could not yet love Miss Stanley, therefore he could not be jealous. But he had been glad to observe that she had from the first seemed to see what sort of a person Mr. Churchill was. She was now only amused, as everybody must be, but she would never be interested by such a man as Horace Churchill, a wit without a soul. If she were—why he could never feel any further interest about her—that was all!

So it went on; and now Lady Cecilia was as much amused as she expected by these daily jealousies, conflicts, and comparisons, the feelings perpetually tricking themselves out, and

strutting about, calling themselves judgments, like the servants in Gil Blas in their master's clothes, going about as counts, dukes, and grandees.

"Well, really," said Lady Cecilia to Helen, one day, as she was standing near her tambour frame, "you are an industrious creature, and the only very industrious person I ever could bear. I have myself a natural aversion to a needle, but that tambour needle I can better endure than a common one, because, in the first place, it makes a little noise in the world; one not only sees but hears it getting on; one finds, that without dragging it draws at every link a lengthened chain."

"It is called chainstitch, is it not?" said the Aide-de-camp; "and Miss Stanley is working on so famously fast at it, she will have us all in her chains by and by."

"Bow, Miss Stanley," said Lady Cecilia; "that pretty compliment deserves at least a bow, if not a look-up."

"I should prefer a look-down, if I were to choose," said Churchill.

"Beggars must not be choosers," said the Aide-de-camp.

"But the very reason I can bear to look at

you working, Helen," continued Lady Cecilia, "is, because you do look up so often—so refreshingly. The professed *Notables* I detest—those who never raise their eyes from their everlasting work; whatever is said, read, thought, or felt, is with them of secondary importance to that bit of muslin in which they are making holes, or that bit of canvass on which they are perpetrating such figures or flowers as nature scorns to look upon. I did not mean anything against you, mamma, I assure you," continued Cecilia, turning to her mother, who was also at her embroidering frame, "because, though you do work, or have work before you, to do you justice, you never attend to it in the least."

"Thank you! my dear Cecilia," said Lady Davenant, smiling; "I am, indeed, a sad bungler, but still I shall always maintain a great respect for work and workers, and I have good reasons for it."

"And so have I," said Lord Davenant. "I only wish that men who do not know what to do with their hands, were not ashamed to sew. If custom had but allowed us this resource, how many valuable lives might have been saved, how many rich ennuyés would not have hung themselves, even in November!

What years of war, what overthrow of empires, might have been avoided, if princes and sultans, instead of throwing handkerchiefs, had but hemmed them!"

"No, no," said Lady Davenant, "recollect that the race of Spanish kings has somewhat deteriorated since they exchanged the sword for the tambour-frame. We had better have things as they are: leave us the privilege of the needle, and what a valuable resource it is; sovereign against the root of all evil — an antidote both to love in idleness and hate in idleness — which is most to be dreaded, let those who have felt both decide. I think we ladies must be allowed to keep the privilege of the needle to ourselves, humble though it be, for we must allow it is a good one."

"Good at need," said Churchill. "There is an excellent print, by Bouck, I believe, of an old woman beating the devil with a distaff: distaffs have been out of fashion with spinsters ever since, I fancy."

"But as she was old, Churchill," said Lord Davenant, "might not your lady have defied his black majesty, without her distaff?"

"His *black* majesty! I admire your distinction, my Lord," said Churchill, "but give

it more emphasis; for all kings are not black in the eyes of the fair, it is said, you know." And here he began an anecdote of regal scandal in which Lady Cecilia stopped him——

"Now, Horace, I protest against your beginning with scandal so early in the morning. None of your *on dits*, for decency's sake, before luncheon; wait till evening."

Churchill coughed, and shrugged, and sighed, and declared he would be temperate; he would not touch a character, upon his honour; he would only indulge in a few little personalities; it could not hurt any lady's feelings that he should criticise or praise absent beauties. So he just made a review of all he could recollect, in answer to a question one of the officers, Captain Warmsley, had asked him, and which, in an absent fit, he had had the ill-manners yesterday, as now he recollected, not to answer —Whom he considered as altogether the handsomest woman of his acquaintance? Beauclerc was now in the room, and Horace was proud to display, before him in particular, his infinite knowledge of all the fair and fashionable, and all that might be admitted fashionable without being fair — all that have the *je ne sais quoi*, which is than

beauty dearer. As one conscious of his power to consecrate or desecrate, by one look of disdain or one word of praise, he stood; and beginning at the lowest conceivable point, his uttermost notion of want of beauty—his *laid ideal*, naming one whose image, no doubt, every charitable imagination will here supply, Horace next fixed upon another for his mediocrity point — what he should call just "well enough" — *assez bien, assez* — just up to the Bellasis motto, "*Bonne et belle assez.*" Then, in the ascending scale, he rose to those who, in common parlance, may be called charming, fascinating; and still for each he had his fastidious look and depreciating word. Just keeping within the verge, Horace, without exposing himself to the ridicule of coxcombry, ended by sighing for that being 'made of every creature's best'— perfect, yet free from the curse of perfection. Then, suddenly turning to Beauclerc, and tapping him on the shoulder — "Do, give us your notions — to what sort of a body or mind, now, would you willingly bend the knee?"

Beauclerc could not or would not tell — "I only know that whenever I bend the knee," said he, "it will be because I cannot help it!"

Beauclerc could not be drawn out either by

Churchill's persiflage or flattery, and he tried both, to talk of his tastes or opinions of women. He felt too much perhaps about love to talk much about it. This all agreed well in Helen's imagination with what Lady Cecilia had told her of his secret engagement. She was sure he was thinking of Lady Blanche, and that he could not venture to describe her, lest he should betray himself and his secret. Then, leaving Churchill and the talkers, he walked up and down the room alone, at the further side, seeming as if he were recollecting some lines which he repeated to himself, and then stopping before Lady Cecilia, repeated to her, in a very low voice, the following.

"I saw her upon nearer view,
A spirit, yet a woman too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles."

Helen thought Lady Blanche must be a charming creature if she was like this picture; but somehow, as she afterwards told Lady Cecilia, she had formed a different idea of Lady

Blanche Forrester—Cecilia smiled and asked, "How? different how?"

Helen did not exactly know, but altogether she had imagined that she must be more of a heroine, or perhaps more of a woman of rank and fashion. She had not formed any exact idea — but different altogether from this description; Lady Cecilia again smiled, and said,

"Very natural; and after all not very certain that the Lady Blanche is like this picture, which was not drawn for her or from her assuredly — a resemblance found only in the imagination, to which we are, all of us, more or less, dupes; and *tant mieux* say I — *tant pis* says mamma—and all mothers."

"There is one thing I like better in Mr. Beauclerc's manners than in Mr. Churchill," said Helen.

"There are a hundred I like better," said Lady Cecilia, "but what is your one thing?"

"That he always speaks of woman in general with respect — as if he had more confidence in them, and more dependence upon them for his happiness. Now Mr. Churchill, with all the adoration he professes, seems to look upon them as idols that he can set up or pull down, bend the knee to or break to pieces, at plea-

sure — I could not like a man for a friend who had a bad, or even a contemptuous, opinion of women—could you, Cecilia?"

"Certainly not," Lady Cecilia said; "the General had always, naturally, the greatest respect for women. Whatever prejudices he had taken up had been only caught from others, and lasted only till he had got rid of the impression of certain "untoward circumstances." Even a grave, serious dislike, both Lady Cecilia and Helen agreed that they could bear better than that persiflage which seemed to mock even while it most professed to admire.

Horace presently discovered the mistakes he had made in his attempts, and repaired them as fast as he could by his infinite versatility. The changes shaded off with a skill which made them run easily into each other. He perceived that Mr. Beauclerc's respectful air and tone were preferred, and he now laid himself out in the respectful line, adding, as he flattered himself, something of a finer point, more polish in whatever he said, and with more weight of authority.

But he was mortified to find that it did not produce the expected effect, and, after having done the respectful one morning, as he fancied

in the happiest manner, he was vexed to perceive that he not only could not raise Helen's eyes from her work, but that even Lady Davenant did not attend to him; and that, as he was rounding one of his best periods, her looks were directed to the other side of the room, where Beauclerc sat apart; and presently she called to him, and begged to know what it was he was reading. She said she quite envied him the power he possessed of being rapt into future times or past, completely at his author's bidding, to be transported how and where he pleased.

Beauclerc brought the book to her, and put it into her hand. As she took it she said, "As we advance in life, it becomes more and more difficult to find in any book the sort of enchanting, entrancing interest which we enjoyed when life, and books, and we ourselves were new. It were vain to try and settle whether the fault is most in modern books, or in our ancient selves; probably not in either: the fact is, that not only does the imagination cool and weaken as we grow older, but we become, as we live on in this world, too much engrossed by the real business and cares of life, to have feeling or time for

factitious, imaginary interests. But why do I say factitious? while they last, the imaginative interests are as real as any others."

"Thank you," said Beauclerc, "for doing justice to poor imagination, whose pleasures are surely, after all, the highest, the most real, that we have, unwarrantably as they have been decried both by metaphysicians and physicians."

The book which had so fixed Beauclerc's attention, was Segur's History of Napoleon's Russian Campaign. He was at the page where the burning of Moscow is described—the picture of Buonaparte's despair, when he met resolution greater than his own, when he felt himself vanquished by the human mind, by patriotism, by virtue—virtue in which he could not believe, the existence of which, with all his imagination, he could not conceive: the power which his indomitable will could not conquer.

Beauclerc pointed to the account of that famous inscription on the iron gate of a church which the French found still standing, the words written by Rostopchin after the burning of his "delighful home."

"*Frenchmen, I have been eight years in embellishing this residence; I have lived in it hap-*

*pily in the bosom of my family. The inhabitants of this estate (amounting to seventeen hundred and twenty) have quitted it at your approach; and I have, with my own hands, set fire to my own house, to prevent it from being polluted by your presence.*"

"See what one, even one, magnanimous individual can do for his country," exclaimed Beauclerc. "How little did this sacrifice cost him! Sacrifice do I say? it was a pride—a pleasure."

Churchill did not at all like the expression of Helen's countenance, for he perceived she sympathised with Beauclerc's enthusiasm. He saw that romantic enthusiasm had more charm for her than wit or fashion; and now he meditated another change of style. He would try a noble style. He resolved that the first convenient opportunity he would be a little romantic, and perhaps, even take a touch at chivalry, a burst like Beauclerc, but in a way of his own, at the degeneracy of modern times. He tried it—but it was quite a failure; Lady Cecilia, as he overheard, whispered to Helen what was once said, we believe, of Chateaubriand—

"*Ah! le pauvre homme! comme il se batte les flancs d'un enthousiasme de commande.*"

Horace was too clever a man to persist in a wrong line, or one in which his test of right *success* did not crown his endeavours. If this did not do, something else would—should. It was impossible that with all his spirit of resource he should ultimately fail. To please, and to make an impression on Helen, a greater impression than Beauclerc—to annoy Beauclerc, in short, was still, independently of all serious thoughts, the utmost object of Churchill's endeavours.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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